



Hansard

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

60th Parliament

Wednesday 8 February 2023

Office-holders of the Legislative Assembly

60th Parliament

Speaker

Maree Edwards

Deputy Speaker

Matt Fregon

Acting Speakers

Juliana Addison, Christine Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Paul Edbrooke, Bronwyn Halfpenny,
Paul Hamer, Michaela Settle, Meng Heang Tak and Jackson Taylor

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier

Jacinta Allan

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier

Ben Carroll

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition

John Pesutto

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Deputy Leader of the Opposition

David Southwick

Leader of the Nationals

Peter Walsh

Deputy Leader of the Nationals

Emma Kealy

Leader of the House

Mary-Anne Thomas

Manager of Opposition Business

James Newbury

Members of the Legislative Assembly
60th Parliament

Member	District	Party	Member	District	Party
Addison, Juliana	Wendouree	ALP	Lambert, Nathan	Preston	ALP
Allan, Jacinta	Bendigo East	ALP	Maas, Gary	Narre Warren South	ALP
Andrews, Daniel ²	Mulgrave	ALP	McCurdy, Tim	Ovens Valley	Nat
Battin, Brad	Berwick	Lib	McGhie, Steve	Melton	ALP
Benham, Jade	Mildura	Nat	McLeish, Cindy	Eildon	Lib
Britnell, Roma	South-West Coast	Lib	Marchant, Alison	Bellarine	ALP
Brooks, Colin	Bundoora	ALP	Matthews-Ward, Kathleen	Broadmeadows	ALP
Bull, Josh	Sunbury	ALP	Mercurio, Paul	Hastings	ALP
Bull, Tim	Gippsland East	Nat	Mullahy, John	Glen Waverley	ALP
Cameron, Martin	Morwell	Nat	Newbury, James	Brighton	Lib
Carbines, Anthony	Ivanhoe	ALP	O'Brien, Danny	Gippsland South	Nat
Carroll, Ben	Niddrie	ALP	O'Brien, Michael	Malvern	Lib
Cheeseman, Darren	South Barwon	ALP	O'Keeffe, Kim	Shepparton	Nat
Cianflone, Anthony	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Pallas, Tim	Werribee	ALP
Cleland, Annabelle	Euroa	Nat	Pearson, Danny	Essendon	ALP
Connolly, Sarah	Laverton	ALP	Pesutto, John	Hawthorn	Lib
Couzens, Christine	Geelong	ALP	Read, Tim	Brunswick	Greens
Crewther, Chris	Mornington	Lib	Richards, Pauline	Cranbourne	ALP
Crugnale, Jordan	Bass	ALP	Richardson, Tim	Mordialloc	ALP
D'Ambrosio, Liliana	Mill Park	ALP	Riordan, Richard	Polwarth	Lib
De Martino, Daniela	Monbulk	ALP	Rowswell, Brad	Sandringham	Lib
de Vietri, Gabrielle	Richmond	Greens	Sandell, Ellen	Melbourne	Greens
Dimopoulos, Steve	Oakleigh	ALP	Settle, Michaela	Eureka	ALP
Edbrooke, Paul	Frankston	ALP	Smith, Ryan ³	Warrandyte	Lib
Edwards, Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Southwick, David	Caulfield	Lib
Fowles, Will ¹	Ringwood	Ind	Spence, Ros	Kalkallo	ALP
Fregon, Matt	Ashwood	ALP	Staikos, Nick	Bentleigh	ALP
George, Ella	Lara	ALP	Suleyman, Natalie	St Albans	ALP
Grigorovitch, Luba	Kororoit	ALP	Tak, Meng Heang	Clarinda	ALP
Groth, Sam	Nepean	Lib	Taylor, Jackson	Bayswater	ALP
Guy, Matthew	Bulleen	Lib	Taylor, Nina	Albert Park	ALP
Halfpenny, Bronwyn	Thomastown	ALP	Theophanous, Kat	Northcote	ALP
Hall, Katie	Footscray	ALP	Thomas, Mary-Anne	Macedon	ALP
Hamer, Paul	Box Hill	ALP	Tilley, Bill	Benambra	Lib
Haylett, Martha	Ripon	ALP	Vallence, Bridget	Evelyn	Lib
Hibbins, Sam	Prahran	Greens	Vulin, Emma	Pakenham	ALP
Hilakari, Mathew	Point Cook	ALP	Walsh, Peter	Murray Plains	Nat
Hodgett, David	Croydon	Lib	Walters, Iwan	Greenvale	ALP
Home, Melissa	Williamstown	ALP	Ward, Vicki	Eltham	ALP
Hutchins, Natalie	Sydenham	ALP	Wells, Kim	Rowville	Lib
Kathage, Lauren	Yan Yean	ALP	Werner, Nicole	Warrandyte	Lib
Kealy, Emma	Lowan	Nat	Wight, Dylan	Tarneit	ALP
Kilkenny, Sonya	Carrum	ALP	Williams, Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
Wayne Farnham	Narracan	Lib	Wilson, Belinda	Narre Warren North	ALP
			Wilson, Jess	Kew	Lib

¹ ALP until 5 August 2023

² Resigned 27 September 2023

³ Resigned 7 July 2023

⁴ Elected 3 October 2023

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

ALP – Australian Labor Party, Greens – Australian Greens,

Ind – Independent, Lib – Liberal Party of Australia, Nat – National Party of Australia

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Wednesday 8 February 2023

The SPEAKER (Maree Edwards) took the chair at 9:32 am, read the prayer and made an acknowledgement of country.

*Committees***Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee***Membership*

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (09:33): I move, by leave:

That Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Kim O’Keeffe and Iwan Walters be members of the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee.

Motion agreed to.

*Members statements***Roger Newbury**

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (09:34): It is with incredible sadness and a heavy heart that I rise today to record the passing of my father Roger Kingsley Newbury. Father to me, Charles and Stephanie and grandfather to six, Roger was 75 years old when he passed. He had lived a full life both professionally and personally. He was proud that throughout his dental career he had helped tens of thousands of people, a career he was destined to take up, with both his father and two older brothers practising dentistry. Throughout his career he became an industry peer, having been elected president of the peak dental body, the dental association, and a leader in other industry bodies. He treasured his time growing up with sand between his toes on Phillip Island. Our family is sure that the island is in the Newbury DNA, with Erehwon Point at Cowes being named after my great-grandfather William Dawson Davie’s guesthouse Erehwon, the name being the word ‘nowhere’ backwards.

But as a father and grandfather, my father’s mind was almost always on his children and grandchildren. His patients, many of whom stayed with him for his 50-year career, would say to me that he would often talk about his family, and as we know, once you have submitted to a dentist you have no option but to listen. Although it is heartbreaking that he is no longer with us, we know that he is now with his beloved parents and brothers, who will be looking down from the stars towards Erehwon Point. On behalf of the Newbury family, our hearts are broken. Vale, Dad.

City of Greater Bendigo citizen of the year awards

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery) (09:35): My sympathy to the member for Brighton and his family.

I rise today to congratulate and acknowledge the 2023 citizen and young citizens of the year in the City of Greater Bendigo. The Citizen of the Year is Trevor Strauch. Trevor is very well known in the Huntly community and incredibly active as a volunteer. Everything that is going on in Huntly, Trevor and his family are involved with it, and I particularly had engagement with Trevor as a member of the Huntly fire brigade. He is a life member of both the Huntly fire brigade and the CFA more broadly and has volunteered actively in a range of emergency events over a very, very long period of time. Trevor is also active in the Northern Bendigo Landcare Group, and he has previously been active in Rotary. It is a well-deserved recognition of Trevor’s service to the Huntly community.

We have two young citizens of the year this year. Amelia Leach-Unmeopa is an 18-year-old young woman, a proud Torres Strait Islander woman. She received Zonta Bendigo’s inaugural Indigenous Women and Girls Achievement Award, and that was in recognition of the work she did at Bendigo

Senior Secondary College. She was influential in having the college install acknowledgement of country signage.

Mitchell Graham is 21 years old. He is in his third year as president of Empowering Eaglehawk. He is active in his Eaglehawk community in the local sporting community, and his time at Eaglehawk Secondary College saw him represent the school in a range of sports.

Hamilton V/Line ticketing

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (09:37): I raise a matter for the Minister for Public Transport. Recently the Hamilton community were very surprised to hear that the V/Line ticketing office would be closed. There was no notice given to the community, and this is of course of critical importance. It means there is a loss of jobs locally and there is a loss of services, but more importantly, local people and particularly elderly people are going to find a backlog to be able to buy a ticket to get on a bus to travel to Ararat and get on a train and go through to Melbourne. Often there are a lot of people who are waiting to buy a ticket. There is simply not enough time for bus drivers to be able to sell all of those tickets. It is a similar situation that we have seen in Horsham with the closure of the ticketing office there. In both sites there are no local ticketing agents. I ask the minister: did he approve of the closure of the Hamilton office, why did Labor support this and what businesses have been approached to provide an opportunity to become a V/Line ticketing agent and ensure these services are not discontinued?

VicTrack Horsham land

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (09:38): I have a second matter for the Minister for Public Transport. We know that VicTrack are not always fabulous managers of the land, and this includes the Horsham railway precinct. At the moment, VicTrack have an EPA order and a clean-up notice, which must be undertaken before the end of March. However, there are additional issues in that area, and that includes overgrown grass, which presents a fire hazard but also is of risk to the people who live adjoining the railway precinct. Our Tidy Towns committee want to have this tidied up before their inspection. It has got a proud history: eight wins over the time – *(Time expired)*

Carrum electorate schools

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Minister for Planning, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (09:38): With school returning last week, it was terrific to join Carrum Primary, Seaford Primary and Skye Primary at their first school assemblies for 2023 and join with families and students to present the school leaders with their badges for this year. I am delighted to congratulate the school leaders at Seaford Primary and wish them all the very best. I know they will be wonderful role models and ambassadors for the school. Congratulations to year 6 captains Clara Muller, Alayna Paulke, Nicholas O’Sullivan and Patrick Raynor; STEAM captains Zaviah Alexander-Featonby and Jack Cronin; art captains Julius Semisi and Zoe Howard; sports captains Connor McNeill and Levi Bell; environment captains Catherine Paisley, Luke Van Dang and Massimo Muleta; ICT captains Jasmina Galesa and Thomas Scott; communication captain Lucas Evelyn; and year 5 school vice-captains Aidan Kerans, Lydia Novikova-Kherschberg, Miranda Higgins and Jake Arvanitis.

Women’s Spirit Project

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Minister for Planning, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (09:39): Congratulations also to Jodie Belyea on recently receiving this year’s Frankston City Council Community Award for her initiative, the Women’s Spirit Project. This terrific initiative supports women who may be vulnerable in the community and brings them together to provide support and encouragement, and she has been a tremendous role model and ambassador in our local area.

Carrum electorate

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Minister for Planning, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (09:40): Finally, can I thank the electorate and the voters in Carrum for re-electing me for a third term and an Andrews Labor government. I am so grateful for the opportunity to serve again.

Hindu and Sikh communities

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (09:40): I rise on behalf of communities out in the Berwick electorate. I am very proud to represent such a multicultural community where we have got people from different faiths and different countries who all work together as one to try and achieve some fantastic outcomes. Recently in Victoria we have seen some unrest, particularly between Hindu and Sikh communities, and I have been working with those communities in my electorate to try and find a way so that we do not have the conflict that we are seeing over in India brought here to Australia. We as a state survive on the fact that we can work well together. We have got a wonderful democracy, and when we do have issues or differences we can sit down, discuss them and put a message out.

I call on the leaders of both the Hindu and Sikh communities in my electorate to join together and ensure that we can have that one message, and that one message is: whilst we are going to have differences – and they do back in India at the moment – we can work together to ensure that we have a statement to call people to team up as one and have one strong statement to say that the violence and the graffiti and criminal damage we have seen on temples here in our state is not acceptable. We must protect places of worship. We must ensure that people have the confidence that it is a safe place, and the only way to do that is for all the leaders to join together, no matter which side they are on, and turn around to their communities and say how important it is to unite, to work together and ensure that there is no violence, no criminal damage and that places of worship are the safe places they promise to be.

Türkiye and Syria earthquakes

Natalie SULEYMAN (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Youth) (09:41): On Monday 6 February at 4:17 am a magnitude 7.8 earthquake hit Türkiye. This was followed by many other aftershocks. I am deeply saddened and shocked by the news of this major earthquake in Türkiye and in Syria. This earthquake is one of the most disastrous to hit Türkiye and the world in recent history. We know that over 23 million people will be affected by this, and our hearts are breaking. I join with the Turkish community in Victoria in a seven-day period of mourning. My thoughts and prayers are with Turkish Victorians and of course all our family and friends across the world. This is a very difficult time for Turkish Victorians who may have family and friends and cannot connect with their loved ones. Everyone has been affected by these really devastating and heartbreaking scenes that we are seeing in Türkiye. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has announced \$10 million in humanitarian support to assist Türkiye, and many other countries have followed as well. I have spoken directly to the Premier, and we stand ready to support Türkiye. Also the Turkish embassy in Canberra has officially established an account, and we hope that we can raise vital funds for Türkiye.

Türkiye and Syria earthquakes

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (09:43): The Turkish community are in all our minds at the moment. It is absolute devastation.

Woodchop events

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (09:43): The sport of woodchopping cannot exist without logs, and now the sport is at risk of being lost if logs cannot be sourced. Access to the essential part of the sport has been closed to axemen, with the surety of log supply no longer provided. Some 80 to 100 woodchop events are held in Victoria each year, and they are particular drawcards at events. Although there are enough logs available for the Tolmie sports day on 4 March, the woodchop at the

Alexandra truck show in June is in jeopardy, as are many others. If woodchopping is lost, so is a part of Australian heritage. The government must ensure there is a sustainable solution to this problem.

Bus route Z24

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (09:44): Students catching the Z24 bus from Yarra Glen to Lilydale were left high and dry on the first day of school last week. The school bus was full and unable to take them. I was contacted by very concerned parents when 15 students had been left on the side of the road. Young year 7s on their first day of secondary school, kids with special needs and VCE students were understandably upset and distressed. This is far from the ideal way to start a new school year. By the end of the week we had a backup bus, which is actually a backup for the backup bus that was already in existence, so I call on the minister to provide a permanent solution to the matter. There are no secondary schools in Dixons Creek, Yarra Glen and Coldstream – they must travel. There are too many students on the waiting list, and the government needs – *(Time expired)*

Lunar New Year

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (09:45): I would like to take this opportunity to wish my community in the electorate of Laverton a very happy Lunar New Year, whether you are celebrating the Year of the Cat or the Year of the Rabbit. Of course for communities like mine with significant numbers of East Asian families, the Lunar New Year is such a great time for celebration and coming together with family. I know for the Brimbank community, which is home to a very strong and very vibrant Vietnamese community, it is a wonderful opportunity for families to get together and celebrate the wonderful diversity that makes up our part of Melbourne's mighty west.

That is certainly something I will be celebrating, as I very much look forward to taking part in the Lunar New Year celebrations with the fantastic Sunshine Business Association. This is happening this weekend, and I know that the Sunshine Business Association and those committee members have put in so much hard work over such a long period of time in setting up this wonderful event, which will bring the entire community together to celebrate the Lunar New Year. It is going to be an event, I am proud to say, our government has supported through the multicultural festivals and events program, so it will be absolutely delightful to be there. I am going to be having a stall with my good friend and colleague the member for Fraser, Daniel Mulino. I would like to invite everyone in my community to come down and say hi and to celebrate Lunar New Year.

Australia Day

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (09:46): What a great day was had around Latrobe City for Australia Day. With this being my first as a new MP, it was a pleasure to attend some local town celebrations but also the new citizenship ceremony and Australia Day awards. The citizenship ceremony was an absolute highlight, with many families looking nervous but ever so proud to become Australian citizens. Well done to all involved. The 2023 Citizen of the Year for Latrobe City was Nicholas King, who from an idea to build a mountain bike track raised support and funds to have this amazing mountain bike park, with 13 kilometres of tracks in the Haunted Hills near Moe. Well done, Nicholas King. Such a deserving winner.

Liddiard Road Primary School

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (09:47): The Liddiard Road Primary School in Traralgon has announced its school captains for 2023. I would like to congratulate Reid, Adieu, Chloe and Warren on the wonderful roles they are doing for the school. Principal Peter Haberl and I talked about the wonderful breakfast club the school runs. This provides students with breakfast at school, as many are not able to eat at home. Liddiard Road was one of the first to introduce this program many, many years ago. The school has approximately 300 students. I look forward to visiting all schools over the next month to congratulate the 2023 leaders.

Northcote electorate

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (09:48): I am deeply honoured to stand in this chamber representing the electorate of Northcote for a second term. I thank the wonderful people of the inner north, and with renewed energy I reaffirm my unwavering promise to them: to work each and every day to deliver real outcomes for our community. Every day in government is a gift and responsibility, and I am immensely proud to be part of a Labor government propelling this to new heights.

In Northcote there are many exciting things on the horizon. We will have an early parenting centre and a mental health and wellbeing hub, more schools will be upgraded and there are transport projects on the way and more protections for our creeks. Free kinder, TAFE and nursing courses are generating opportunities like never before. A stronger health system will give people more options to access care outside the hospital. Critically, we are bringing back the SEC to drive down bills and rapidly move to net zero.

Northcote faces challenges. We must tackle cost-of-living pressures, drive investment into our suburbs and deliver reforms that create security, support innovation and safeguard our future. As the Parliamentary Secretary for Women's Health I also look forward to bringing a new focus to improving women's access to quality health care. To my community: thank you. Let us let this next chapter begin.

Rowville electorate roads

Kim WELLS (Rowville) (09:49): This statement condemns the Andrews Labor government for the total neglect of major roads in the electorate of Rowville, namely the Lysterfield, Napoleon, Wellington and Ferntree Gully roads. At the last election this issue in Rowville was the second most important to constituents after health. Residents are sick and tired of potholes breaking the road surface and dangerous road shoulders, and the roads have not been sealed properly. But to make matters worse, the federal member for Aston, Alan Tudge, actually secured federal funding to fix these roads. On 1 April 2019 – nearly four years ago – Alan Tudge announced that he had secured funding to duplicate Napoleon Road from Kelletts Road through to Glenfern Road. Further still, the money was in the Victorian state Labor 2019 budget paper 1, page 142. Furthermore, Alan Tudge secured a further \$100 million of federal funding to upgrade Wellington Road, and again the Andrews government, through gross incompetence, sat on the money and did absolutely nothing. Then on top of all this the Albanese government came along and in their very first budget axed \$900 million of key Victorian road and rail projects. Federal Labor cancelled the \$50 million for Napoleon Road and now the \$110 million for Wellington Road and the \$475 million rail link between Monash Uni Caulfield and Clayton campuses.

Ringwood electorate level crossing removals

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (09:50): Labor is doing what matters, and our level crossing removals fit squarely into that commitment. The Andrews Labor government is removing 110 level crossings right across the state of Victoria, including the very last crossings to be found in the Ringwood electorate. We have already removed crossings at Blackburn Road, Blackburn; Springvale Road, Nunawading; and Heatherdale Road in Heatherdale. But there is more to do, and in the coming years we will be removing our last local crossings, at Dublin Road and at Bedford Road.

This project is a crucial step in making the Lilydale train line level crossing-free by 2025 and creating a safer, less congested and more connected community. We are also building a brand new Ringwood East station, with a main concourse, a second entry, accessible platforms and upgraded pedestrian and cycling paths, and it will be easier to get to the station with a significant parking upgrade as well. These level crossings at Dublin Road and Bedford Road see over 23 000 vehicles each day and can have the boom gates down for up to 23 minutes during the morning peak. Removing them means not just faster commutes but also more trains, more often. Construction starts in early 2023, and by 2025 trains will be running in the new rail trench – a huge milestone for our community, plus it will create hundreds of great jobs for local workers.

I would like to thank the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure for her leadership and commitment to the Level Crossing Removal Project, which is continuing to deliver for my community of Ringwood as Labor gets on and does what matters.

Duck hunting

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (09:52): At the beginning of every new year I receive hundreds and hundreds of emails from people in great distress about the looming beginning of duck-shooting season in Victoria, and this year was no different. I received hundreds of emails from distressed and compassionate community members who simply cannot believe that Victoria still allows and encourages the killing of our native waterbirds for fun, especially when so many other states have banned it. The devastating flooding that occurred across the state last year had an impact on our wildlife and habitat. Ducks were no exception. An aerial survey showed that six of the eight duck species targeted during shooting season are in long-term population decline, and we have seen proof that endangered species are regularly killed during duck-shooting season each year.

I was heartened to hear rumours that the government are possibly considering banning duck shooting ahead of this year's season. I would like to once again add my voice to the calls for an end to this barbaric practice. Polling shows that an overwhelming majority of Victorians agree that duck shooting should be banned. Will this be the year – 2023 – that the government finally listens to experts and the community? Please let us hope so. The Greens will keep fighting for our wildlife until this government bans duck shooting.

Tarneit festivals

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (09:53): It was great to see the kites flying in Tarneit the other week at the Tarneit kite festival. Kite flying is a traditional way to celebrate the Festival of Uttarayan in India, the festival that marks the changing of the seasons. Festival goers enjoyed the beauty of a sky filled with soaring kites, along with workshops in kite making and kites for sale. Cultural performances were on display, including with Bollywood dancers and dance workshops. DJs were spinning a mix of western and Bollywood tracks to keep crowds entertained, with plenty of authentic traditional foods to indulge and sample.

The event was part of the Meet me in Tarneit series delivered by Wyndham City Council in partnership with the Andrews Labor government and the Tarneit suburban revitalisation board. Indeed this was a fantastic example of what a fantastic multicultural community Tarneit is and the sense of community that it has. On any given weekend you can come to Tarneit and attend one of these fantastic multicultural festivals, whether it be the mother tongue language festival in Tarneit, whether it be Eid, or whether it be the Diwali festival. We can always come to Tarneit and experience that. I look forward to working with the board and the community in promoting more local projects in Tarneit. (*Time expired*)

Mount Eliza Secondary College

Chris CREWETHER (Mornington) (09:55): I want to raise the situation of Mount Eliza Secondary College in my electorate of Mornington. Many of the buildings are nearly 50 years old and falling apart. It is the secondary college with the most need of infrastructure investment in my electorate. It was the first commitment I made as the candidate for Mornington back in March last year, and I am glad that this is my first speech after my maiden speech to this Parliament. This secondary college has needed funding since the early 2000s. We have had a Labor government for nearly 20 of the last 24 years, so they have had enough time to invest in the school, and I call on the Minister for Education to do so. We need to put needs in education and in other areas over the party holding a seat or the marginality of the seat. We need to put needs in education infrastructure investment over politics. It is overdue at this school, and I call on the Minister for Education to invest in Mount Eliza Secondary College for the benefit of the parents, the teachers, the students, the future students and the benefit of everyone in my electorate of Mornington.

Ashwood electorate

Matt FREGON (Ashwood) (09:56): Oh, we are back, Speaker, and I am going to give you a quick update on what has been a jam-packed start to 2023 in my new patch of Ashwood district, which is still home. What a fantastic privilege it is to continue to represent my local communities of Glen Iris, Chadstone, Burwood, Ashwood and of course my beloved Mount Waverley.

Mount Waverley North Primary School

Matt FREGON (Ashwood) (09:56): In no particular order, 30 January saw 2023 preps commence their first day of school, and what better way to welcome our new littlies than to give them new prep bags full of reading for story time with mum and dad. Prep bags continue to be a fantastic way of welcoming our new students. It was my pleasure to meet the energetic preppies at Mount Waverley North Primary School. A huge shout-out to Natalie Grieve and the team down there, who are doing fantastic work. They are so excited to see the new synthetic pitch on their oval coming up later this year – it is going to be a cracker.

Lunar New Year

Matt FREGON (Ashwood) (09:57): Back in January I also joined my colleagues from along the south-east, along with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, if you do not mind, at the Whitehorse City Council's Lunar New Year festival. A big shout-out to the Asian Business Association of Whitehorse for putting on such a great day, and a huge event kicked off a month of what saw buzzing with local festivals, community events and multicultural celebrations.

Australia Day

Matt FREGON (Ashwood) (09:57): It was also my pleasure to join the City of Monash mayor Tina Samardzija in welcoming 82 new citizens to our country at the City of Monash Australia Day citizenship and awards ceremony – and I am not going to get them all done.

Tom McClelland

Nick STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (09:58): I rise to pay tribute to Tom McClelland, who passed away on 29 December last year at the age of 90. I was privileged to have been invited to attend Tom's birthday celebration last year. When Tom got up to give his speech last year, he said he would speak for 1 minute for every decade of his life, and by the end of his speech he was around 500 years old – that is because he led a very, very interesting life.

I met Tom around 10 years ago. Tom and I were in the same art group at Godfrey Street Community House, and one day Tom declared to the group, 'I was there when we bought *Blue Poles*'. What Tom was referring to was that controversial decision of the Whitlam government to purchase that famous Jackson Pollock painting in 1973 for \$1.3 million, now worth apparently around \$500 million. I then found out that Tom was for many years a senior public servant at the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, serving under Whitlam, Fraser and Hawke. He was central to a number of key policy decisions, including establishing the Kakadu National Park as well as Indigenous land rights. But what I loved best about Tom was that when you spoke to him, he would be genuinely interested in you, in what you thought about things, in your experiences, in your motivations. I am led to believe he was a Liberal voter, but I am glad he made an exception for me. I was forever grateful.

Frankston electorate

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston) (09:59): It is my pleasure to get up today and talk about the honour of being the member for Frankston again and re-elected so comprehensively. Our community voted for action; they voted for a state representative that cares about integrity, cares about the environment and cares about our community. We made several commitments to our community which turned out to be very, very popular with voters in our area: FDBA – Frankston and District Basketball Association; the Mount Erin College, Overport Primary School, Aldercourt Primary School and

Mahogany Rise Primary School redevelopments; the David Scott School redevelopment; the massive commitment to remove all level crossings on the Frankston line; a new PET scanner for Frankston Hospital; \$20,000 for Frankston Scouts; supporting the Frankston breakfast club; of course four-year-old kinder in Frankston, which is amazing; and a new tech school in Frankston. We also committed \$11.7 million for a redevelopment of the Mount Eliza North Primary School, which I know the member for Mornington will be very, very excited about. That is under a Labor government.

Black Saturday

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston) (10:00): I would like to just make sure that it is on the record that yesterday was the anniversary of Black Saturday, which impacted our state tremendously and shaped our response to natural disasters and the recovery from those natural disasters in a huge way. We see the legacy of Black Saturday in the resilience of our Victorian community every day, and our thoughts are with those carrying the scars.

Hoang Nguyen

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Government Services, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Consumer Affairs) (10:01): I rise to remember the life of Hoang Nguyen, who worked in social housing for many years. I first met Hoang in around 2016, when Hoang had to find homes for 198 households as part of the rebuilding of the Flemington public housing estate. Hoang sat with tenants, he asked what they wanted, and he worked tirelessly to get the very best outcome for public housing tenants. I remember there was an older resident who lived up on the third storey of the walk-ups and was in a wheelchair. Hoang met with him, found that he had lived in South Melbourne as a child and located a flat for the resident within a short commute on his scooter to the South Melbourne Market. That was the kind of guy that Hoang was. Hoang treated public housing tenants with respect, with dignity and with decency. He simply was everything that you could want from a housing worker, and he always did it with a smile. Hoang was just outstanding, and I think it would be fitting for the Minister for Housing to consider naming an annual award for housing support excellence in Hoang's name. Hoang, thank you so much for caring.

Caterina's Unisex Salon

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Government Services, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Consumer Affairs) (10:02): December the 1st, 1972, was a very big day for Union Road, Ascot Vale, when Caterina opened Caterina's Unisex Salon and haircuts were, wait for it, \$2.50. I was delighted to be able to attend the 50th anniversary celebrations with Nick, Caterina's son, and his wife Gina and children Olivia and Daniella. It was great to meet with Caterina herself, still going strong 50 years on. Thank you for everything that you have done for our community. Union Road would not be the same without the magnificent contribution that you and your family have made.

Water safety

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (10:02): Swimming is a great Australian passion. Our weather lends itself to it, in Melbourne sometimes. But anyway, safety-in-water skills need to be developed early, and so I am really pleased that our government has a \$3.4 million initiative to deliver 280 inclusive employment opportunities at pools and leisure centres around the state. How fantastic is that? It was really wonderful to be able to attend Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre with Minister Ben Carroll for this announcement, and I met the wonderful Chloe Turner. She is a swim teacher, she is a triathlete and a local and she is getting right into it, and this means so much to her. It was wonderful to hear that firsthand and to see how she is making such a difference in our community, and so many more people will. There is huge demand. They are great jobs. You are not stuck to a desk and are keeping the community a safer place, so if you are interested, I suggest you get on board.

Albert parkrun, Melbourne

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (10:03): I also want to do a shout-out to Scott and Joanne, who coordinate the Albert Melbourne fun run. They are bringing people together. They are getting them fit. I have walked around the lake; I cannot say I actually ran. But nevertheless that is okay. It is fine. As long as you are there, you are looking a little bit sporty, you are taking part, you are being friendly – bang on. It was wonderful. I actually volunteered a couple of weeks ago, and there are so many volunteers. They bring everyone together. Thank you.

Türkiye and Syria earthquakes

Bronwyn HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (10:04): I would like to express my condolences and sorrow, hearing the news of the terrible earthquake in – *(Time expired)*

Statements on parliamentary committee reports**Integrity and Oversight Committee**

The Independent Performance Audits of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission and the Victorian Inspectorate

Kim WELLS (Rowville) (10:04): I rise to speak on the Integrity and Oversight Committee report, *The Independent Performance Audits of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission and the Victorian Inspectorate*. But before I go into detail on the report, can I put on record the excellent work of the secretariat, led by Sean Coley. The IOC is actually a combination of two committees from the previous term of Parliament: the IBAC committee, which I chaired from 2014 to 2018, and the Accountability and Oversight Committee, which was chaired by Neil Angus, the then member for Forest Hill. The IBAC Committee secretariat was led by the great Sandy Cook – highly, highly intelligent, super smart, absolutely tenacious in her views and had an incredible ability to be able to find a set of words to work through a paper where all sides of politics would agree. I always found it difficult to believe that her favourite day of the year was grand final day because she could go and do her shopping on a Saturday afternoon without anyone being in Woolworths. To this day, I still cannot understand her logic – evidently. So Sean Coley had big shoes to fill to pull the two committees together, and he has done an absolutely excellent job. He has always had great help from Dr Stephen James, former researcher from the IBAC Committee, as part of the team, who has a brilliant, brilliant mind. Thanks also to Tom, Holly, Maria and Bernadette.

The actual make-up of the committee over the last four years has been very unusual, I would say. In fact the only constants over the four years were the deputy chair, the MP for Sandringham, and me; our roles in the whole four years did not change at all. The one thing that is important to a committee as crucial as Integrity and Oversight is consistency, absolute consistency, and the Andrews government obviously missed that part of the memo – the need for consistency. So let us go through what actually happened on the committee. First off, we had our first chair. Chair number one was the member for Melton. He got sick and tired of being the chair for the IOC, so he stepped down. Then we had chair number two, who was the member for Altona, Jill Hennessy. Jill, being a former Attorney-General, was very good in that position. Then Jill stepped down because she got sick and tired of the committee. So then we had chair number three. Can you remember chair number three?

Brad Rowswell: Ms Shing.

Kim WELLS: No, no, the member for Sandringham is actually incorrect. We had the member for Ringwood come in as chair number three. He did not last much longer, so then we had chair number four, who was –

Brad Rowswell: Ms Shing in the other place.

Kim WELLS: member for Eastern Victoria Ms Shing. And blow me down, just when we think that we have finally, finally got someone to see out the rest of the term, what happens? Harriet gets promoted and we end up with the member for –

Gary Maas: Narre Warren South.

Kim WELLS: Narre Warren South. Fortunately, the member for Narre Warren South saw out the rest of the term, so we are very thankful for the member for Narre Warren South. But he was the fifth chair, so we were in a position where we were having a welcome lunch and a farewell lunch on pretty much the same day when we were turning over these chairs. It was embarrassing, and it was particularly embarrassing with the secretariat having to brief up a brand new, brand new, brand new chair the whole time. It was frustrating for us on our side of politics. Meanwhile, if they had just stuck with or promoted the member for Sandringham and made him the chair, we would have had four years of consistency and we would have been able to get on with it.

Towards the end of the parliamentary term a number of decisions did not seem to be consistent with what the committee was doing, so we would be making a decision and all of a sudden we would see something in the paper that was completely different. So that is the conclusion of my discussion on the audit, and I wish the new committee very well.

Integrity and Oversight Committee

The Independent Performance Audits of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission and the Victorian Inspectorate

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston) (10:09): I also rise to speak on the Integrity and Oversight Committee report which reviewed the performance of Victoria's integrity agencies, such as IBAC, the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner and the Victorian Ombudsman. They also reviewed the management of witness welfare during this inquiry. Can I start by saying thank you to the members of that committee. We have heard about embarrassment. On this side of the house there was no embarrassment – changes happen and people adapt and come to those positions and they do very well. The member for Narre Warren South has done a fantastic job, as have the former members of that committee as well.

Cindy McLeish interjected.

Paul EDBROOKE: As the member for Eildon knows, committee work can be some of the most rewarding work, I think, in this role. You can be a backbencher in your community, making change in your community, but all of a sudden you have got the chance to make change at a statewide level through policy or legislation, and I certainly had the chance to do that. I, along with several members in this chamber, was part of the Family and Community Development Committee with the member for Geelong; the member for Bendigo West, the now Speaker; the member for Lowan, I think; the member for Eildon; and the member for South-West Coast – I cannot forget South-West Coast. There was a great secretariat as well for that committee. Some examples of what we were able to achieve through regional and metro hearings of the perinatal services inquiry include an introduction of more cuddle cots, and we informed the Parliament on the pressures of workforce shortages in regions and the possible options and outcomes we can have. And there is lots more to do – there is indeed lots more to do – but you need to know how to do it and where to do it.

Cindy McLeish: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I thought the member on his feet was actually supposed to be speaking on the Integrity and Oversight Committee. He has strayed a very long way from that, and I ask you to bring him back.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member has strayed from the committee report and would be advised to come back to it, please.

Paul EDBROOKE: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. I was just about to give the member for Eildon a compliment about that. You have cut me off. Look, this committee of course will continue to be responsible for monitoring and reviewing the performance of those agencies, and I very much look forward to reading their next report. I believe the new committees will be announced fairly soon, and I obviously hope the member for Narre Warren South is still the chair of the committee. I think I will leave it there and give other people time to contribute to this very important report.

Integrity and Oversight Committee

The Independent Performance Audits of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission and the Victorian Inspectorate

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (10:12): I also rise to speak – perhaps in a little bit more detail than the member for Frankston – on the minority report actually submitted by the member for Rowville titled *The Independent Performance Audits of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission and the Victorian Inspectorate*. The member for Rowville, you will be surprised to hear me say, is absolutely correct: there was very little consistency with the Integrity and Oversight Committee of the last Parliament, and that was not the fault of the opposition. The opposition were, frankly, the only constant in that committee. I was really actually grateful for the member for Rowville, who helped me as a new member of Parliament and a new member of the Integrity and Oversight Committee undertake my work as deputy chair of that committee in the last Parliament. Just to have the member for Rowville's expertise, knowledge and guidance I was very grateful for, as he had served on previous iterations of the committee in previous parliaments.

Now, to the minority report itself, we felt as an opposition it was important to table a minority report to get on the record some of the issues that were experienced by the committee during the course of the inquiry. The reason we felt that was important to do was so lessons could be learned for future committees, because this audit that was undertaken by the committee on behalf of the Parliament, on behalf of the people of Victoria, of two integrity agencies – being the Victorian Inspectorate and the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission – was the first of its kind, so you would expect there to be issues. A first-of-its-kind audit, new legislation being enacted through the authority of the Integrity and Oversight Committee – of course there are going to be issues. But frankly, and I think I speak for the member for Rowville when saying this, we did not expect how many issues there would be. There were significant issues; firstly, with the appointment of the auditor, who we believe – and it is articulated in the minority report – misrepresented their ability to undertake the performance audit competently. That was a real shame because we had faith in the auditors, Callida, to undertake an effective audit against the requirements of the act to determine whether these agencies 'are achieving their objectives effectively, economically and efficiently'. We believe that Callida, on a number of occasions, sadly, fell well short of that.

We made one recommendation only in this minority report, and we trust that the government will consider this recommendation seriously because the recommendation was made in absolute good faith and, as I say, with the view for lessons to be learned from the last Parliament. That recommendation is the following: that the incoming Integrity and Oversight Committee of the 60th Parliament should review, with the intention of rewriting, the legislation concerning auditing in the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Act 2011 and the Victorian Inspectorate Act 2011.

We came across so many issues during the course of this audit that we believe that the Integrity and Oversight Committee should undertake a review of those acts in order to tidy these things up to get greater clarity for the auditor, greater clarity for the community and greater clarity for the agencies. There were issues during the course of this audit. The agencies gave a bit of pushback to the auditor, but the auditor did not assert themselves in the way that we thought they should have asserted themselves in order to undertake an audit to the degree that the committee expected them to take. So this does need a full-scale review by the incoming Integrity and Oversight Committee.

Just finally, I do want to reference some comments made by the outgoing Commissioner of IBAC, the Honourable Robert Redlich, who at the end of last year in one of his final public interviews suggested that the chairmanship of the Parliament's Integrity and Oversight Committee should be held by a non-government member. I think that is entirely appropriate. That does not necessarily need to be a member of the opposition, but it is entirely appropriate because, as we demonstrated as opposition in the last Parliament, the only consistent thing in the Integrity and Oversight Committee during the last Parliament was our presence there. I commend this minority report to the Parliament.

Integrity and Oversight Committee

The Independent Performance Audits of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission and the Victorian Inspectorate

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (10:17): I would like to reiterate to the chamber that this is incredibly important subject matter, and the government indeed takes it very seriously and has throughout the entire process. Contrary to some of the creative inferences, can I say, of the opposition –

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Could the member inform us what report she is speaking on?

Nina TAYLOR: Yes, that would have been helpful: the Integrity and Oversight Committee report on IBAC. Sorry about that; I just launched in there, didn't I. I should have actually set the context for what I was going to talk about. I think I was a little distracted by, as I said, some of the creative inferences that I heard. I shall read it out, because it is even better to have it in front of me, isn't it. So let me do that as I stand: *The Independent Performance Audits of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission and the Victorian Inspectorate*. There we are. We have a clear context. I am feeling much more comfortable in this situation, and I shall proceed again.

It is incredibly important subject matter. The government does take it seriously – we have heard some interesting commentary from the opposition. However, I would in this instance like to commend the secretariat and to applaud them. I know, having done a lot of committee work myself, that there is certainly an intensity about it – there is a huge workload. I think all that have been involved should be incredibly proud of their contributions. Rather than being negative, I would like to be positive about all who have done their best in their regard to delivering a high-quality report.

Integrity and Oversight Committee

Performance of the Victorian Integrity Agencies 2020/21: Focus on Witness Welfare

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (10:19): I am delighted to rise to speak on the Integrity and Oversight Committee's report, and I particularly want to focus on witness welfare. I certainly want to begin by acknowledging the sensitivity of the subject and the importance of ensuring adequate mental health –

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Which report?

Tim McCURDY: The Integrity and Oversight Committee report.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: There are two.

Tim McCURDY: Sorry?

Kim Wells: Witness welfare.

Tim McCURDY: Witness welfare.

Tim McCURDY: Thank you, member for Rowville. I would also like to say how important fair, transparent and open proceedings are in a democratic society – something we should never take for granted. This report, whilst focusing on the need to provide welfare support for integrity agency witnesses, also touches on a much broader issue of mental health and welfare support for all Victorians. Statistics on mental health are scarce, and very good data is even more scarce; however, the best

research indicates that one in five Victorians have experienced a mental health condition in the past year, with instances of anxiety and depression increasing yet again. We know why there has been this large increase in mental health issues: with the Andrews Labor government's record-breaking lockdowns, almost half of Victorians reported moderate or severe depression, compared to 32 per cent in other states. This is particularly prevalent amongst the younger generation, who we know are forced to adapt to a rapidly changing world – and when you think about it, three years ago the world was an entirely different place. Despite all the data pointing to a rapid increase in mental health issues and the government talking about the work they are doing, we are still hearing about the desperate need in our communities for greater mental health support. Indeed paragraph 2.3 of the report speaks about the need to provide welfare proactively, and I believe this can be expanded certainly to the needs and the welfare of all Victorians.

Accessibility is the largest reason for regional Victorians not getting the support they need, and many people have to wait months if they are fortunate enough to be seen by a professional. If you want an example of where the failure of this support happens, in the remote area of Falls Creek, at Bogong High Plains Road, there has been a landslip, and those communities are cut off from Mount Beauty and their normal communities. When I talk to them they tell me how they are struggling and how isolated they feel at the moment. They cannot easily access mental health support, let alone in the short term when they need it the most. The government should be proactively going to places like the Falls Creek community and offering mental health support that they otherwise would not have access to. 'We are offering proactive support to witnesses' – well, we should be proactive about reaching out to the most remote Victorian communities, who need it the most.

Regional Victorians are worried, and they are worried because of the track record of cutting mental health support where it matters the most. We have had a royal commission into Victoria's mental health system and seen the need for major changes to that system. I acknowledge that progress is being made, but I remind the government to ensure that regional Victorians, like the constituents in the Ovens Valley, are certainly not left behind. Rather than following their federal counterparts, who are keen to slash Medicare-funded psychologist appointments, I urge the government to take a leaf out of those on this side of the chamber's book and deliver a plan that will fix the mental health system and beef up our integrity agencies to deliver for all Victorians.

I also take a moment to note the minority report put together by my colleagues the member for Sandringham and the member for Rowville, which raises several worthy recommendations around transparency in the event of private hearings and submissions as well as the powers and roles of the Integrity and Oversight Committee. Whilst it is important to respect the welfare and wellbeing of witnesses, we must also respect the need for transparent and open investigations and hearings. We know how easy it can be for the government to cover their tracks. We cannot allow this to continue without a reasonable explanation for such privacy. Integrity is the cornerstone of our democracy, something we should cherish and never take for granted. It is also at the same time important to respect the huge mental health challenges faced by witnesses and by Victorians – and the sensitivity.

I conclude by urging the government to ensure that any increases in consideration of witness wellbeing do not come at the cost of integrity and free and open hearings. Victorians have a right to know about the slippery slope the government walks and are sick and tired of having the wool pulled over their eyes. Mental health needs to be taken seriously and dealt with proactively but not used as an excuse to cover up corruption from Victorians, who deserve to know the truth.

Integrity and Oversight Committee

The Independent Performance Audits of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission and the Victorian Inspectorate

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (10:24): It gives me some pleasure to rise to speak in the committee reports part of today. To avoid any doubt, I would like to speak to *The Independent Performance Audits of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission and the Victorian*

Inspectorate. Of course the report was made in the 59th Parliament, at a time when things were a lot simpler. For instance, there were only 55 members on this side.

A member: How many are there now?

Gary MAAS: Fifty-six, I think. But of course it was tabled in December of last year. I too, like some of my colleagues in this place who were on the committee last year, would like to say a big thankyou, with a great sense of gratitude, in fact, to the secretariat of this committee and, I would say, one of the hardest working secretariats in this Parliament. I will mention them by name because they all play very specific roles, and quite frankly their collective is so much greater than the sum of their individual parts, because the team that they have created over there really does help inform the work that the committee does. To Sean Coley, who is the committee manager and basically keeps the vehicle on the road: I commend your work. Dr Stephen James, who is the senior research officer, just adds incredible academic insights and reasoning to the research grunt work that is performed by the committee. To that end, in terms of that research grunt work, I would say a big thankyou to Tom Hvala and Holly Brennan – incredible work under very difficult circumstances. It would have been very difficult for them towards the end of last year. While all the other committees had finished up their work – some were on secondments, others were probably taking leave – they themselves were working right through until 31 October, and I commend the work that they did throughout that period. Of course all of that work means nothing unless you have got incredible admin and an incredible admin crew that pieces all of that work together, and to that end I would like to thank Maria Marasco and Bernadette Pendergast as well.

I do note that there was a minority report that was put in this report, and look, I will say this: if you are going to make a minority report on a report into an audit of which the work is incredibly important to the future of our integrity agencies, then you make sure that that report actually goes to some substance and detail. There is no point in producing something that looks like it has been slapped together at the last minute – I think it goes for a total of something like four pages – and trying to attack the actual integrity of a report that has taken a year to put together. The only constant in this place is change, and if you cannot get used to that, then you probably should not be in politics is my view.

I commend this report. It is a great report, and it has been put together very, very carefully from the work that was provided by Callida, who were the auditors. As I have said in my foreword to the report as chair of that committee, there is a tremendous amount of disappointment that we express to IBAC and the Victorian Inspectorate, who did not provide the information that was required in order for the independent auditor to conduct the performance audit to the fullest extent possible. We did not provide a four-page, skinny justification for that. What we did provide was some very eminent legal opinion from a KC and a very senior legal counsel. To that end, I still do commend the report, and I thank the house for its time.

Bills

Health Legislation Amendment (Information Sharing) Bill 2023

Statement of compatibility

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (10:30): In accordance with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 I table a statement of compatibility in relation to the Health Legislation Amendment (Information Sharing) Bill 2023.

In accordance with section 28 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*, I table a statement of compatibility for with respect to the Health Legislation Amendment (Information Sharing) Bill 2023

In my opinion, the Health Legislation Amendment (Information Sharing) Bill, as introduced to the Legislative Assembly, is compatible with the human rights as set out in the Charter. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview of the Bill

The Bill amends the *Health Services Act 1988* (HS Act) to provide for the establishment of a secure electronic system to enable public hospitals and specified health services to share specified patient health information for the purpose of providing medical treatment to patients. The Bill also permits information access, use and disclosure for system establishment and maintenance, and makes consequential amendments to the *Health Records Act 2001* (HR Act).

Human Rights Issues

The Bill engages the Charter rights to privacy (s 13(a)), freedom of expression (s 15) and rights in criminal proceedings (s 25(1)). To the extent that the Bill limits any Charter rights, such limits are reasonable and justifiable in accordance with section 7(2) of the Charter.

Electronic Health Information Sharing System

The Bill amends the HS Act to require the Secretary to the Department of Health to establish and maintain an Electronic Patient Health Information Sharing System (the System) (cl 4). The System must contain any specified patient health information that the Secretary requires to be collected. The Secretary can, by notice published in the Government Gazette, specify health information to be given by a participating health service for the purposes of the System, and a relevant date in relation to that health information. A participating health service must give to the Secretary prescribed health information and unique identification numbers assigned to persons the subject of the information, if the information was collected on or after the date specified, within certain timeframes. Where a relevant health service does not comply with a gazetted notice, the Bill provides for the Secretary to give written directions to a participating health service to give the specified health information or unique identification numbers required.

Under the Bill, the Secretary and participating health services may collect, use and disclose specified patient health information as permitted or authorised by the Bill without the consent of the person to whom the information relates. Access to and use of prescribed information held on the System is limited to persons who are employed or engaged by a participating health service and who are authorised by that service to access the System and use and disclose specified patient health information for the purposes of providing medical treatment to that patient. The only other reasons that persons authorised by a participating health service may access information on the System are for the purpose of giving the information to the Secretary as required by the Bill or for information security and data management purposes. The Secretary, or a person employed or engaged and authorised in writing by them, may also access the System to use and disclose specified patient health information or unique identification numbers for the purposes of establishing, maintaining and operating it, undertaking information security and data management, and otherwise ensuring that the System operates securely and effectively.

Privacy (s 13(a))

Section 13(a) of the Charter provides that a person has the right not to have their privacy, family, home or correspondence unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with. An interference will be lawful if it is permitted by a law which is precise and appropriately circumscribed, and will be arbitrary only if it is capricious, unpredictable, unjust or unreasonable, in the sense of being disproportionate to the legitimate aim sought.

The amendments contained in the Bill will allow for the interference with the privacy of persons to whom specified patient health information or identifiers stored on the System (System information) relates. System information may be 'health information' under the HR Act. Health information can include information on the physical, mental or psychological health of a person, or other personal information collected in the course of providing them a health service. Compulsorily collecting such information from health services and providing access to it without consent or an option to opt-out will engage the right in section 13(a) of the Charter.

However, to the extent that the amendments which provide for the System interfere with the Charter right to privacy, I consider that the right will not be limited. Any interference will be authorised by legislation that is appropriately circumscribed. Where the Bill provides for matters relevant to the collection or use of information for the System to be prescribed by notice in the Government Gazette, such as specified health information to be given by participating health services, these powers are appropriately constrained. In accordance with the provisions of the Bill, the Secretary may only prescribe, for collection for the System, the health information of a person who has received treatment from a participating health service, and that health information is being collected for the purpose of providing medical treatment to the person. Reasonable time limits apply to the retrospective application of gazetted notices which provide certainty as to the scope of health information that is collected for the System. Although the Bill does not further restrict the categories of information that may be prescribed, I am satisfied that this formulation is necessarily flexible to allow for the Secretary to prescribe emerging types of health information required for medical treatment and care, whilst

being clearly connected to the purpose of the System. I am therefore satisfied that such interferences with privacy will be lawful.

I am also satisfied those interferences with individuals' privacy that may occur under these provisions will be predictable and proportionate to the objects of the System and will therefore not be arbitrary. The amendments will not require the collection of new information from individuals but rather facilitate the transfer of copies of existing information, already collected and held by public hospitals and health services, to a central platform. Access to the System will be limited to persons working at participating health services, who would have been able to access the same information through the records of the participating health service, or to seek the information from other health services, albeit on a one-to-one, rather than one-to-many information-sharing basis. Use of System information will only be permitted for the important purpose of providing medical treatment, or for System maintenance. The Bill also contains safeguards to protect against misuse of System information, including by creating offences for:

- unauthorised persons knowingly accessing the System unless authorised to do so under new Part 6C of the HS Act (Part 6C), otherwise unless the person was authorised or required under the Bill or another Act to do so, or required by law;
- authorised persons accessing the System other than in accordance with Part 6C, unless the person did so as authorised or required by the Bill or another Act, or as required by law; and
- authorised persons accessing the System using and disclosing specified patient health information obtained by that person other than in accordance with Part 6C, unless expressly required authorised or required by the Bill or any other Act, or required by law.

The legislative protections that apply to health information in the HR Act, and to personal information under the PDP Act will remain largely unaffected by the Bill (subject to the amendments discussed below). Any interference with privacy occasioned by the establishment and operation of the System is for the beneficial purpose of improving medical care by providing clinicians with better access to persons' medical records held across multiple health services to improve patient safety and quality of care.

To the extent that the security and protection of information is related to the privacy of information, I note that strong technical measures in addition to the safeguards provided in the Bill will apply to the System to protect against any unauthorised access. Furthermore, the System will be subject to the Victorian Protective Data Security Standards.

Accordingly, I consider that the provisions in the Bill providing for the establishment and use of the System will not limit the Charter right to privacy.

Limits on access to System information

The Bill amends the HR Act to exclude the System from the requirements in Health Protection Principles (HPP) 1.3 that organisations only collect health information from the individual the subject of the information, and the requirement in HPP 1.5 that where organisations collect health information about individuals from other parties, that they make those individuals aware of the third-party collection and other factors (cl 5). The Bill also amends the HR Act to exclude persons' right of access to and correction of System information in HPP 6 and Part 5 (cl 5), and amends the HS Act to provide that the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act) (cl 4) does not apply a document given to the Secretary for the purposes of complying with new Part 6C or the System and therefore not subject to requests for access under the FOI Act. A consequential effect of this amendment is that a person's right under s 39 of the FOI Act to request the correction or amendment of documents that contain personal information will not apply.

Privacy (s 13(a))

The Charter right to privacy in s 13(a) is based on Article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The United Nations Human Rights Committee has issued guidance on Article 17 which provides that persons should have the ability to ascertain which public authorities control their data, and to request the correction or deletion of personal data that contains incorrect information.

The right to privacy may appear relevant to clauses 4 and 5 of the Bill because they limit individuals' right of access to and correction of their personal information held on the System. However, any interference with privacy occasioned by these limits will be authorised by legislation, and appropriately tailored to achieve their purpose. The System will only contain copies of information already stored by public health services. Limiting access to, and the right to seek correction by a person of System information relating to them, is to ensure the coherence of individual's health information. Information relating to a person that is held on the System may only capture part of their health information, whereas it is more likely that individual health services hold information that is complete and in context. Should an individual wish to access or amend their health information, or had concerns about incorrect information being recorded, they can access and correct the information through their health service provider. If this occurs, a participating health service would be

required to share that updated information with the System. Therefore, correcting information through a participating health service will effectively trigger an automatic update to System records.

Clauses 4–5 therefore do not restrict the ability of persons to access their own information or frustrate their right to correct it, but rather just ensure that information is accessed or corrected through a health service. This will ensure that, in substance, only health services can amend System information, requiring that health services vet information that is collected by the System. This avoids the risk that the System would become a ‘source of truth’ for health records that are the responsibility of health services, or of System information about a person being amended without the person’s health service provider being notified. Therefore, in my view, these clauses do not engage the right in s 13(a) of the Charter. Even if clauses 4–5 were found to interfere with the privacy right in s 13(a), I consider that the right would not be limited because the interference is both lawful and not arbitrary - particularly because persons would have alternative means of accessing and correcting the same information as contained on the System and, moreover, that the establishment for the System is for the beneficial purpose of improving medical treatment and care by providing clinicians with better access to a persons’ medical records.

Freedom of expression (s 15)

Section 15 of the Charter provides that every person has the right to hold an opinion without interference and has the right to freedom of expression which includes the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds. This has been interpreted to include a positive right to access information held by the government. Section 15 also provides that lawful restrictions may be reasonably necessary to respect personal rights and reputations, or for the protection of national security, public order, public health or public morality.

Clauses 4–5 may engage the right to freedom of expression by limiting access to information on the System. However, the same information will be accessible from the participating health service. As above, persons will have the ability to access information through a public health service. Therefore I consider that although the right to freedom of expression may be relevant to these clauses, the right will not be limited. Even if these provisions were considered to limit the right in s 15 of the Charter, I consider that any limit would be reasonable and justifiable under s 7(2) of the Charter. This is because the clauses will not restrict the information actually available to persons, just the sources from which they could seek to obtain and correct it. Any such limitation is considered to be necessary for the efficient operation of the System, having regard to its overall beneficial purpose, and therefore is compatible with the Charter.

Criminal penalties

As mentioned, the Bill will amend the HS Act to insert three new offences for unauthorised use of the System, or unauthorised access, use and disclosure of System information, to protect the privacy of System information. Relevantly, the offences will incur penalties of 240 penalty units or two years imprisonment. Each offence will not apply if the person was authorised or required by the Bill or another Act, or required by law, to access the System. For the offence of unauthorised use or disclosure of System information, the threshold is “expressly” authorised or required by or under the Bill, another Act, or by law.

Rights in criminal proceedings (s 25(1))

Section 25(1) of the Charter provides that a person charged with a criminal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law. The right is relevant where a statutory provision shifts the burden of proof onto an accused in a criminal proceeding, so that the accused is required to prove matters to establish, or raise evidence to suggest, that they are not guilty of an offence.

The right to presumption of innocence may appear to be relevant because for each new offence in the Bill, the offence provision will not apply if the person was authorised or required by the Bill, or required by law, to access the System. Because these provisions prohibit an act from being done unless it is committed by persons with specified authorisations, it may be viewed as imposing an evidential burden on the accused. However, in doing so, these provisions do not transfer the legal burden of proof. Rather, they provide a carve-out which will enable an accused to escape liability where they had a lawful basis for accessing the System. The prosecution is still required to prove all the other elements of each offence. I do not consider that an evidential onus such as is contained in these provisions limits the right to be presumed innocent, and courts in other jurisdictions have taken this approach.

For the reasons set out in this Statement, in my opinion, the Bill is compatible with the human rights as set out in the Charter.

The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP
Minister for Health
Minister for Health Infrastructure
Minister for Medical Research

Second reading

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (10:30): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I ask that my second-reading speech be incorporated into *Hansard*.

Incorporated speech as follows:Introduction

Most Victorian patients will visit more than one health service for health care and treatment. The availability of complete and accurate health information at the right time and at the right place will save lives and is essential for providing the very best care for patients.

Currently in Victoria, critical health information is spread across different health services, in separate systems and in paper-records.

This fragmentation of patient health information often means that clinicians manually gather patient health information, through fax or phone calls. This is inconsistent with modern health record sharing standards, and the approach taken by other Australian jurisdictions such as New South Wales, Queensland, ACT and South Australia, which have successfully implemented health information sharing at the point of care.

The Health Legislation Amendment (Information Sharing) Bill will enable information-sharing between specified health services, through a secure platform operated and managed by the Department of Health (the Department).

The Department would have the authority to securely hold and share health information between and across public health services electronically.

The Bill will amend the Health Services Act 1988 to establish a health information platform, for relevant health services to share certain health information for the purpose of providing medical treatment and care to patients.

The amendments will also authorise collection and disclosure of health information to the Secretary for the purpose of establishing and maintaining the electronic health information platform.

The Bill changes will apply to the following specified entities:

- public hospitals,
- multi-purpose services,
- denominational hospitals,
- metropolitan hospitals,
- prescribed health services,
- registered community health centres,
- the ambulance service,
- the Victorian Institute of Forensic Mental Health; and
- the Victorian Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing.

The application of the Bill recognises the challenges of siloed information across the Victorian public healthcare system, and the importance of strengthening the system for the health and wellbeing of all Victorians. We recognise that a consolidated picture of a patient's medical and health history is essential to the provision of the safe and high-quality care in our public hospitals.

The main objectives of the Bill are to establish a single, secure platform for health records, enable interchange of information between health services when required, improve patient safety, decrease avoidable harm and deliver person-centred care. The patient's care journey can take them to many different public health services over the course of their illness or condition. There are risks to the quality and safety of patient care when information is fragmented or missing across that journey.

Failure to correctly identify patients across health services, match their information, and accurately share that information can lead to poor health outcomes for patients. These include unintended injury, infections, problems with medications, as well as unnecessary duplication of diagnostic tests.

In urgent situations and emergencies where the patient and their family are not able to provide a full and clear picture of their past medical history, this can compromise and delay the delivery of safe, timely and high-quality care.

Creating an easier, safer, and more secure way of sharing of health information between public health services will ensure that treating clinicians have a complete and integrated picture of a patient's history.

This will support clinical decision-making and reduce the risk of missing important medicines information and allergies. It will let the treating clinician see important medical images and laboratory results, to manage the patient more safely.

The reforms are fundamental to strengthening the Victorian healthcare system and delivering on key government commitments as outlined in the 2016 Targeting Zero Report. The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System also acknowledged the lack of information sharing culture.

More recently, both the flood crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated where better health information sharing practices could have been used to support doctors, nurses, and allied health staff with their clinical decision making, benefitting the whole community.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the barriers to health information sharing and some consequences of those barriers for patients and clinical staff. Clinicians in our hospitals can only access COVID test results where that test was done by their own pathology service.

More than 15 laboratories contribute to COVID testing across Victoria, however. This means that the majority of COVID test results are not available to treating clinicians in their health service record systems. COVID test results done in a drive-through or in another other health service must be individually requested. This delays patient care, increases the risk of exposure of patients and staff to COVID, and adds a further administration burden to the processes of patient care.

The recent floods caused damaged to hospitals and loss of paper records. During these difficult circumstances, flood-affected Victorians were treated at facilities where they did not normally attend. Many patients were also seen by telehealth services provided by Victoria's virtual ED. The inability to access a single information sharing platform meant that sometimes access to timely healthcare was delayed in these circumstances until health professionals could get a better understanding of a patient's medical history.

Enabling information sharing through state-of-the-art technology operated by the Department is critical to supporting the reforms under way to modernise and future-proof our health system for the health and wellbeing of all Victorians.

The Victorian Government recognises both the sensitive nature of health information and the importance of having critically strict safety, security and privacy measures put in place to ensure it is protected.

To deal with this, extra safety steps will be taken when handling personal health information. Only authorised health service staff will be able to view this information for the purposes of treating a patient. This Bill introduces three new criminal offences to specifically deal with unauthorised access to the platform, access to the platform for unauthorised purposes and unauthorised use or disclosure of information contained in the system.

These criminal offences will attract a fine of 240 penalty units or a maximum term of imprisonment of two years.

The Bill also continues the current position set out in Victorian privacy laws that permit sharing health information for the provision of care and treatment. Rights to access health information and correct it will also be unchanged.

The new platform will improve the way data is stored, making it a safer and more secure system than faxes and phone calls.

Central to these changes of creating a stronger, healthier, and more connected Victoria by sharing information responsibly, safely, and appropriately are robust safeguards and audit processes to securely manage data and protect patient privacy.

There will be real-time business processes and audit checks in place to ensure that health information remains safe and protected. Strong and secure technical measures, including Next-Generation antivirus tools, will protect against any unauthorised access.

The Bill will also provide for an independent review of its effectiveness two years from its commencement. This will allow the impact of the Bill to be assessed and potential improvements to be made.

The government will continue to work with partners including health and legal advocates, health care providers, clinician, and consumer groups to ensure our public hospital system has efficient and connected information sharing that safeguards data, security, and privacy.

In addition, the Department will establish an oversight body to advise the Secretary on key decisions for the safe and secure operation of the health information sharing platform.

Strong clinical governance will be in place to ensure patient safety and quality of care is at the centre of the operation of the platform. These arrangements place the consumer experience at the forefront.

The Department will build on the current practices within Victorian public hospitals to safeguard the sharing of sensitive information by putting in place a privacy management framework. This will limit access to information to designated health service staff who need to see the information for clinical decision-making purposes.

It would provide additional protections for vulnerable groups for issues such as family violence, child protection. It will maintain higher levels of confidentiality for highly sensitive information such as sexual and mental health.

Importantly, the Bill limits the use of the system to the purposes of patient care, treatment and any necessary system maintenance. Robust and effective mechanisms are already in place to support service planning, policy development and research.

The availability of complete and accurate health information at the right time and place saves lives. It is essential to providing the best care and treatment for patients across Victoria.

The Department of Health will continue to work closely with health services to support them in this transition as the new platform is implemented to ensure privacy management compliance and to optimise patient safety, and continuity of care.

Sharing information safely and securely is the foundation of a modern health care system. Through this Bill the Victorian Government continues to put the health, privacy, and security of Victorians first.

I commend the Bill to the house.

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (10:31): I move:

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned for two weeks. Debate adjourned until Wednesday 22 February.

Human Source Management Bill 2023

Statement of compatibility

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (10:33): In accordance with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 I table a statement of compatibility in relation to the Human Source Management Bill 2023.

In accordance with section 28 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*, (**the Charter**), I make this Statement of Compatibility with respect to the Human Source Management Bill 2023 (**the Bill**).

In my opinion, the Bill, as introduced to the Legislative Assembly, is compatible with the Charter. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview

The Bill establishes a legislative framework to regulate the registration, use and management of human sources by Victoria Police, conferring relevant duties, functions and powers on Victoria Police personnel. Victoria Police will be required to register a person as a human source if their identity is known to Victoria Police; Victoria Police wishes to obtain or use information or assistance from the person to assist a criminal investigation or with the gathering of criminal intelligence; and the person has a reasonable expectation their identity or relationship with police will remain confidential. A person will be defined as a human source from the time they are registered and Victoria Police will be prohibited from using information or tasking the person until they have been registered. This is subject to some narrow exceptions (outlined below).

The Bill also establishes an external oversight framework, where the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (**IBAC**) and the Public Interest Monitor (**PIM**) provide oversight of Victoria Police's human source management program, and the Victorian Inspectorate (**VI**) in turn provides oversight of IBAC and coercive powers exercised by the PIM.

Human Rights Issues**Human rights protected by the Charter that are relevant to the Bill**

The Bill engages the following human rights under the Charter:

- right to life (section 9)
- right to privacy and reputation (section 13)
- right to protection of children in their best interests (section 17(2))
- right to freedom of expression (section 15)
- right to security of person (section 21)
- right to fair hearing (section 24), and
- rights in criminal proceedings (section 25).

For the following reasons, I am satisfied that the Bill is compatible with the Charter and, if any rights are limited, those limitations are reasonable and demonstrably justified having regard to section 7(2) of the Charter.

Registration of human sources to assist in gathering criminal intelligence or to support a criminal investigation

The Bill will require Victoria Police to go through a formal registration process before using a person as a human source to assist with the gathering of criminal intelligence or to support criminal investigations.

A Victoria Police officer must apply to the Chief Commissioner of Police (CCP) or their delegate to register a person as a human source if:

- Victoria Police wishes to obtain information from the person, task the person, or use or disseminate information obtained from the person; and
- the person's identity is known to Victoria Police and they have a reasonable expectation that their identity or assistance to Victoria Police will remain confidential. Whether a person has a 'reasonable expectation of confidentiality' will be an objective test based on the circumstances, rather than the subjective views of the person or Victoria Police personnel.

The registration process will involve a police officer submitting a registration application to the CCP or their delegate, outlining the reasons for the application and including sufficient information for the decision-maker to determine whether to approve the registration. The Bill will enable the CCP or their delegate to verbally register a non-reportable human source in urgent circumstances, where a delay caused by requiring a registration decision to be made in writing would defeat the purpose of the registration. The Bill will also include a streamlined process for registering a person in 'emergency circumstances.' That is, where there is a serious and imminent threat to national security, the community, or the life and welfare of any person, and the information the person is expected to provide cannot be obtained through any other reasonable means.

The Bill will enable the CCP or their delegate to register a person as either a lower risk 'non-reportable' human source, or, if the registration or use of the person as a human source poses a greater risk, as a 'reportable' human source who will be subject to more stringent regulation. The Bill will require the following people to be registered as reportable human sources:

- those who are under the age of 18
- those who have a serious medical or mental health condition, or
- those reasonably expected to have access to privileged information.

The Bill will not require Victoria Police to apply to register a person who proactively volunteers information to Victoria Police on a discrete occasion if the police officer is reasonably satisfied that the person is not under the age of 18, does not have a serious medical or mental health condition, and is not reasonably expected to have access to privileged information.

Right to life and right to security of a person

Section 9 of the Charter provides that every person has the right to life and has the right not to be arbitrarily deprived of life. Section 21(1) of the Charter further provides that every person has the right to liberty and security.

I consider that the rights to life and security are engaged by the provisions in the Bill enabling Victoria Police to register and use people as human sources. The Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants (**Commission**) noted there are significant risks to a person's safety that may arise when they are used as a human source.¹ If a person provides information or assistance to Victoria Police covertly, particularly

about a criminal associate, there is a risk of retaliation against that person should the nature of the person's human source relationship with Victoria Police be suspected or uncovered.

However, for the following reasons, I am satisfied that any interference with the rights to life and security is reasonable and demonstrably justified, and therefore that the Bill is compatible with the Charter.

Providing a legislative framework ensures an appropriately structured pathway for Victoria Police to use human sources to gather criminal intelligence and investigate crime. The Commission noted that human sources play a critical role in detecting and preventing serious crime, particularly as technological advancements and the sophistication of organised crime groups limit the effectiveness of other law enforcement techniques.² There are benefits to policing and community safety that arise from Victoria Police being able to use human sources.

The Bill includes mechanisms to ensure Victoria Police's power to register and use people as human sources is proportionate to the anticipated impacts on their rights to life and security.

The registration process itself is a key mechanism to manage the risks of using a person as a human source. Until an application to register a person as a human source is approved by the CCP or their delegate, Victoria Police will be prohibited from using a person as a human source. This will prevent Victoria Police from acting on information or covertly tasking the person in a way that may engage the person's rights to life or security, until such activity has been properly considered by a senior decision-maker within Victoria Police.

Victoria Police will be required to obtain informed consent from a person before they are registered as a human source. If the person who Victoria Police wishes to register is under the age of 18, both the child and their parent or guardian will be required to provide informed consent for the child to be registered, unless it is inappropriate in the circumstances for the parent or guardian to do so (e.g. if the child is providing information to Victoria Police about the parent or guardian). The Bill includes further safeguards for people under the age of 18 (outlined below) to ensure children are appropriately protected if their parent or guardian's consent is not obtained. These consent requirements will ensure that the human source management framework is voluntary for people to participate in, and that engagement with their rights to life and security is more reasonable.

This consent requirement is subject to only one narrow exception, when a person requiring registration as a human source proactively volunteers information to Victoria Police on a discrete occasion where it is also an emergency. In such cases, the CCP or their delegate will be able to register the person and act on the information without obtaining informed consent, ensuring that Victoria Police can respond quickly to the emergency. Other safeguards will apply to appropriately manage the risks involved, including:

- the requirement to satisfy the high threshold for emergency registrations, outlined above
- an emergency registration will only be valid for the duration of the emergency. Once the emergency circumstances have subsided, Victoria Police must either temporarily suspend the human source's registration pending a further application, or permanently deactivate the human source, and
- retrospective external oversight of emergency registrations by IBAC and the PIM, with the PIM responsible for overseeing emergency registrations of reportable human sources (see further below).

The registration process will also specifically require the CCP or their delegate to consider the risks of registering and using the person as a human source before approving a registration application. The decision-maker must be satisfied that:

- using the person as a human source is necessary and proportionate to achieving a legitimate law enforcement objective
- the risks associated with registering the person have been identified and are capable of being adequately managed, and
- registration is otherwise appropriate and justified.

In determining whether the 'appropriate and justified' threshold is satisfied, the CCP or their delegate are required to consider several factors, including the seriousness of the offence to which the person's information relates; the likelihood of being able to obtain the information through other investigatory or intelligence methods; and conditions that would be imposed on the person's registration. The Bill also draws attention to the CCP's existing obligations under section 38 of the Charter, to ensure proper consideration is given to the potential impact of registration on a person's human rights.

The Bill will include additional requirements for registering a person as a reportable human source. These decisions may only be delegated by the CCP to an officer at or above the rank of Assistant Commissioner. By aligning the seniority of the decision-maker with the level of risk posed by the registration, the Bill provides a clear process to ensure that the use of a person as a human source is appropriate and justified.

In addition to the ‘appropriate and justified’ threshold outlined above, the CCP or their delegate will only be able to register certain reportable human sources in exceptional and compelling circumstances. To register either a child, or a person for the purposes of obtaining or using privileged information, the CCP must be satisfied that:

- there is –
 - o to register people to obtain privileged information – a serious threat to national security, the community, or life and welfare of any person, or
 - o to register children – either a serious threat as outlined above, or a need to investigate a serious offence, and
- in both cases – the information the person is expected to provide cannot be obtained through any other reasonable means.

This additional requirement will assist in ensuring vulnerable people, or those whose registration poses a higher level of risk to the administration of justice or personal safety, will only be registered as human sources where it is proportionate to the risks involved and where there are no other policing methods available to achieve the law enforcement objective.

When considering whether to register a person as a reportable human source, the CCP or their delegate will also need to consider specialist advice. For children, this could be advice from a social worker or adolescent psychologist. For a person with a serious medical or mental health condition, this will be advice from a mental health or medical specialist. For a person reasonably expected to have access to privileged information, this will be legal advice.

The PIM may also make recommendations that the CCP or their delegate must consider before making a decision to register a person as a reportable human source. Victoria Police must notify the PIM of the application to register a person as a reportable human source and provide the PIM with all relevant information to assist the PIM in making recommendations to Victoria Police.

The PIM will provide retrospective oversight of emergency registrations of reportable human sources, noting that these registrations are time critical and require Victoria Police to respond urgently. The CCP or their delegate will be required to provide the PIM with all information relevant to the emergency registration within two business days after registration, to enable timely oversight.

The provision of specialist advice, as well as advice and recommendations from the PIM, will further ensure Victoria Police’s decision to register a person as a human source is informed by a thorough risk assessment and is proportionate to any human rights impacts.

When approving a registration, the CCP or their delegate may impose conditions on how the human source will be used. This will enable Victoria Police to tailor the planned activities of the human source in a manner proportionate to the potential criminal offences being investigated and risks posed to their life and security.

The Bill also includes maximum periods for which a person may be registered as a human source (12 months for a non-reportable human source and six months for a reportable human source), and minimum periods for registration to be reviewed during that time (quarterly reviews for non-reportable human sources and monthly reviews for reportable human sources). The Bill enables Victoria Police to re-register a person upon the expiry of a registration period. Maximum registration periods and required review periods ensure that the risks to a human source’s life or security are managed appropriately, including where those risks change over time.

IBAC will also provide broad external oversight of the human source management framework by retrospectively monitoring Victoria Police’s compliance with the Bill, any regulations, and relevant Victoria Police policies. IBAC’s oversight will ensure that the Bill’s requirements in relation to registering and using people as human sources are upheld by Victoria Police and that any trends towards non-compliance that might endanger a human source’s life or security are identified and addressed.

Right to privacy, right to fair hearing and protection from self-incrimination

Section 13(1) of the Charter provides that every person has a right not to have their privacy, family, home or correspondence unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with. Section 24(1) of the Charter provides that a person charged with a criminal offence has the right to a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent and impartial court or tribunal. Section 25(2)(k) protects the right of a person charged with a criminal offence not to be compelled to testify against themselves or to confess guilt.

While section 25(2)(k) of the Charter refers to ‘a person charged with a criminal offence’, courts have interpreted the protections as extending to a person who has not been charged.³ This interpretation acknowledges that the privilege against self-incrimination can be infringed by using evidence in criminal proceedings that a person was compelled to give prior to being charged.

I consider that these rights may be engaged by the Bill in relation to persons whom human sources are used to investigate (**targets**). The Bill provides a legislative framework for Victoria Police to use human sources to covertly gather information about a target, without the target's knowledge, to assist with criminal investigations. The target may unwittingly provide self-incriminating information to the human source. However, for the following reasons, I am satisfied that any limitation on the target's right to privacy is lawful and not arbitrary. Any limitation on rights to a fair trial or freedom from self-incrimination is reasonable and demonstrably justified, and therefore the Bill is compatible with the Charter.

As noted above, the CCP or their delegate may only approve an application to register a person as a human source if satisfied that it is necessary and proportionate to achieving a legitimate law enforcement objective; the risks can be adequately identified and managed; and registration is otherwise appropriate and justified. Additionally, one of the factors to be considered when determining whether the registration is 'appropriate and justified' is the likelihood of being able to obtain the information through other investigatory or intelligence methods. The elements of the registration test ensure that the use of human sources to obtain information is proportionate to the offences being investigated, and is proportionate to any limitation on the rights of persons being investigated.

Registration and use of people under the age of 18 as reportable human sources

As noted above, the Bill empowers the CCP or a delegate at or above the rank of Assistant Commissioner to register children as reportable human sources, where satisfied that certain criteria have been met. The Commission urged Government to include children as reportable human sources in the legislative framework, recognising the welfare and ethical risks associated with their use as human sources and the framework's role in mitigating these risks.⁴

Right of children to protection in their best interests

Section 17(2) of the Charter states that every child has the right, without discrimination, to such protection as is in his or her best interests and is needed by him or her by reason of being a child.

I consider that the right of children to protection in their best interests is limited by the provisions in the Bill enabling Victoria Police to register and use children as human sources, given the risks to individual safety that arise when doing so. However, for the following reasons, I am satisfied that any limitation with the right is reasonable and demonstrably justified, and therefore that the Bill is compatible with the Charter.

The Bill provides for the registration, use and management of children as human sources, to ensure they are afforded the important safeguards offered by the legislative framework, including the more stringent protections for reportable human sources. If a child provides information to Victoria Police and Victoria Police are prohibited from registering them as a human source, those protections would not be guaranteed and the interactions with Victoria Police would lack both internal and external oversight.

The Bill includes measures to ensure that using a child as a human source is proportionate and justified, recognising that it may limit the right to protection in their best interests. As outlined above, the registration process itself serves as a key mechanism through which the rights of children are safeguarded in the Bill. The registration process ensures that Victoria Police must first go through a formal risk assessment and approvals process before using a child as a human source. As part of this process, Victoria Police will securely store information about the child to protect their identity. Registration therefore provides strong protections to prevent the child's identity and status as a human source from being disclosed in an unauthorised way. It is also an offence under the Bill to disclose a person's status as a human source (see below), which is an additional protection for all human sources, including children.

The Bill also provides a range of robust safeguards at the registration phase. In addition to those outlined above (e.g. the 'exceptional and compelling circumstances' threshold and the requirement to consider specialist and PIM advice), the Bill requires the CCP or the delegate determining a registration application to specifically consider whether:

- the person subject of the application is a child and if so, whether the registration is in best interests of the child, and
- the expected impacts on the child's wellbeing.

Further protections are also provided in the Bill for children following registration (e.g. maximum registration and minimum review periods). Together, these safeguards serve to protect the right of children to protection in their best interests by:

- narrowing the circumstances in which a child can be registered and used as a human source
- ensuring the registration and use of children as human sources is informed by advice and consideration of factors that specifically address the risks to children, and

- ensuring the conditions governing the use of a child as a human source remain commensurate to the risks.

Given the particular vulnerabilities of children aged 14 or younger, the Bill will limit Victoria Police's ability to use children in this age range as human sources. The Bill will prohibit Victoria Police from initiating contact with children aged 14 years or younger for the purpose of requesting, inducing or procuring them to become human sources, only enabling such children to be registered as human sources where they have approached Victoria Police. If a child aged 14 years or younger is registered as a human source, Victoria Police will be prohibited from tasking the child to gather information or provide assistance, and may only obtain or disseminate information where the child has proactively approached Victoria Police with that information. These safeguards ensure that the use of children aged 14 years or younger as human sources is strictly confined and proportionate to the risks involved.

Additionally, children will be entitled to have either a parent, guardian or independent person present during interactions with Victoria Police. The child will also have an entitlement to a lawyer for interactions relating to registration, tasking or deactivation, recognising that these are points in the human source relationship where key decisions are made, and significant risks arise. Victoria Police will be required to notify the child of their right to have a lawyer present prior to any interactions where the entitlement arises. These provisions will ensure Victoria Police's ability to use a child as a human source is reasonable, by providing children with adequate support and protection in the process.

Functions and powers of IBAC and the PIM

To assist in performing their oversight functions under the Bill, both IBAC and the PIM will have the power to:

- access or inspect relevant material
- request information from Victoria Police personnel, and
- require Victoria Police personnel to provide them with answers or documents if necessary.

Victoria Police will also have obligations to report proactively to the PIM on any applications to register a person as a reportable human source and to IBAC on:

- general registration application matters, such as the total number of registration applications submitted and total number of applications approved
- emergency registrations and urgent registrations, and
- emerging issues, such as material contraventions of the human source management framework, instances where Victoria Police used a human source to access to privileged information, and Victoria Police's implementation of IBAC's recommendations.

To facilitate the full and free provision of information by Victoria Police to oversight agencies and best ensure they are able to perform their functions, the Bill overrides secrecy laws and does not allow for Victoria Police to claim client legal privilege or public interest immunity (**PII**) where information is required, requested or directed to be provided by Victoria Police to the PIM or IBAC.

Where the PIM or IBAC direct Victoria Police personnel to provide information, the privilege against self-incrimination will also be specifically abrogated.

Both the PIM and IBAC are required to report annually to the Attorney-General on the performance of their functions under the Bill. For the PIM, annual reporting obligations will include reporting on the number of times they have been notified about an application made by Victoria Police to register a person as a reportable human source, including in emergency circumstances. For IBAC, annual reporting obligations will include reporting on the extent of Victoria Police's compliance with the human source management framework. Both IBAC and the PIM are empowered to provide special reports to the Attorney-General at any time outside of this reporting period, on any of the same matters. Following provision of their reports, the Attorney-General is required to table these in Parliament within 14 sitting days.

Additionally, IBAC and the PIM are required to notify the VI where they have exercised a power to require Victoria Police personnel to provide them with information to support their oversight functions. In turn, the VI is required to report on the performance of its functions in its annual report.

Right to fair hearing and right to freedom from self-incrimination

I consider that the Bill's abrogation of the privilege against self-incrimination where the PIM or IBAC requires Victoria Police to provide material may engage the right to fair hearing in section 24(1) and the right to be free from self-incrimination in section 25(2)(k) of the Charter. However, for the following reasons, I am satisfied that any limits imposed by those clauses on those rights are reasonable and demonstrably justified.

Enabling IBAC and the PIM to compel information from Victoria Police personnel is critical to ensure the oversight agencies can access the material required to perform their oversight functions. Preventing claims of privilege in these instances will also give Victoria Police personnel comfort that they may provide sensitive human source information to oversight agencies lawfully, and without breaching statutory secrecy provisions. The power to obtain necessary information to perform the oversight functions will ensure improved accountability in Victoria Police's human source management framework.

The Bill includes four significant protections for Victoria Police personnel who are compelled to provide information to the PIM or IBAC where the privilege against self-incrimination is abrogated.

First, the abrogation of the privilege against self-incrimination is limited to instances where either the PIM or IBAC direct Victoria Police personnel to provide answers or documents, rather than where information is requested by oversight agencies. This provides the PIM and IBAC with an avenue to access information from Victoria Police personnel without abrogating this privilege (that is, by requesting the information first) and discretion over when the privilege against self-incrimination is abrogated.

Second, the Bill also limits how information can be used where the privilege against self-incrimination has been abrogated. Consistent with other legislative schemes (e.g. section 84 of the *Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Act 2011*), if a member of Victoria Police personnel is compelled to provide information, the Bill expressly prohibits that information being used as evidence against the person who provided it before any court or person acting judicially, except in proceedings for:

- perjury or giving false information, or
- breach of discipline by a police officer.

Third, in addition to the information itself being largely inadmissible, the Bill also provides a derivative use immunity, which prevents any evidence obtained as a direct or indirect consequence of the coercively obtained material from being admissible as evidence against the person who provided it in a criminal proceeding or proceeding that imposes a penalty.

These immunities recognise that, while it may be appropriate for the privilege against self-incrimination to be abrogated to enable the PIM and IBAC to perform their oversight functions under the Bill, it would disproportionately limit a person's rights to a fair hearing and freedom from self-incrimination to enable such information to be used to prosecute or gather further evidence against them.

Fourth, the Bill further provides that both the PIM and IBAC must notify the VI when they have exercised a power to compel Victoria Police personnel to provide material. This requirement will ensure the VI can monitor the lawfulness of the PIM and IBAC utilising coercive powers. Once the VI has assessed the exercise of these coercive powers, it may make recommendations to the PIM or IBAC around any action they should take to remedy conduct that may have been unlawful. This will assist in ensuring coercive powers are exercised in a way that is proportionate to a person's rights under sections 24(1) or 25(2)(k) of the Charter.

Right to privacy

In my opinion, the right to privacy is engaged by the Bill providing for Victoria Police to give information to IBAC and the PIM where required, requested or directed to do so. Given the provision of information in these circumstances is subject to the abrogation of certain privileges and an overriding of secrecy laws restricting information sharing, the material could include personal information relating to individuals involved in the human source management program.

The right to privacy is also engaged by the requirement in the Bill for IBAC and the PIM to provide information in their reports to both the Attorney-General and the VI, and by the VI being required to include information on the performance of its functions under the Bill in its annual report. Such reports could include a limited or high-level form of material provided by Victoria Police personnel and, in subsequently being tabled, could result in that material being made publicly available.

However, for the following reasons, I consider that any interference with this right is lawful and not arbitrary, and therefore that the Bill is compatible with section 13 of the Charter.

The requirements for Victoria Police to provide information about human source management to IBAC and the PIM, as well as the oversight agencies' reporting requirements, are intended to promote greater accountability and transparency of Victoria Police's human source management program.

Information relevant to a decision to register a person as a reportable human source is likely to be subject to PII. Legal or specialist advice obtained as part of the registration process may also be subject to client legal privilege. Preventing claims of privilege is therefore critical to the PIM and IBAC's ability to perform their respective oversight functions.

To balance these objectives with human rights, the Bill includes protections to safeguard the right to privacy for a person involved in Victoria Police's human source management program.

The Bill explicitly prohibits IBAC, the PIM and the VI from including in their annual reports information that could tend to reveal the person's involvement in the human source management program. Agencies are required to omit from their reports information that could reasonably be expected to disclose a person's identity or location, or otherwise compromise their security, if:

- Victoria Police has applied to register the person as a human source (including where an application is yet to be determined or has been rejected), or
- the person is currently or was previously registered as a human source.

Before reports are provided to the Attorney-General, the PIM and IBAC will be required to provide a copy to the CCP, who may recommend the removal of sensitive information outlined above.

Offence of unauthorised disclosure of human source information

The Bill creates offences for a person to disclose information that reveals, or is likely to reveal, that another person is registered as a human source, has previously been registered as a human source (but has since been deactivated), or is someone who Victoria Police has applied to register as a human source. The purpose of these offences is to ensure that a person's potential, current or former involvement in Victoria Police's human source management program is not made publicly known in a way that could jeopardise their safety. This offence protects the identities of individual human sources or people who have been involved in the human source process without limiting transparency around Victoria Police's use of human sources.

The offence is modelled on section 30 of the *Crimes (Assumed Identities) Act 2004* (**Assumed Identities Act**), which makes it an offence for a person to disclose any information that reveals, or is likely to reveal, that an assumed identity acquired or used by another person is not the other person's real identity. The offence in the Assumed Identities Act provides a relevant model for the offence in the Bill, given both legislative schemes deal with circumstances where a person is involved in covert activity with Victoria Police and their true identity and the nature of the assistance they are providing is hidden from the public.

The Bill includes exceptions to the offence where a person discloses information for a purpose permitted under the Bill. These exceptions include disclosing information for the administration of the Bill, for the purpose of legal proceedings (including obtaining legal advice), or where the information is disclosed in accordance with any other law.

Rights to life, privacy and security of a person

In my opinion, the new offences will assist in promoting a human source's right to life (section 9), right to privacy (section 13) and right to security of person (section 21).

By broadly prohibiting disclosure of information that could reveal their involvement in Victoria Police's human source management program, the Bill will protect human sources against the risks to their life or security that could arise if this information is disclosed. By capturing information about people who Victoria Police has applied to register as human sources and people who were previously registered as human sources (rather than only people who are currently registered as human sources), the offence appropriately mitigates these risks at all points where they may arise throughout the human source relationship with Victoria Police, not just from the point of registration.

Right to a fair hearing and freedom from self-incrimination

In my opinion, the operation of the offence provisions in the Bill will also help promote the right to a fair trial (section 24) and freedom from self-incrimination (section 25) for persons who human sources are used to investigate.

The exceptions to the offence provisions ensure that information about the use of a human source may still be disclosed where this is required in criminal proceedings.

Right of freedom of expression

Section 15 protects a person's right to seek, receive and impart information freely. Section 15(3) states that lawful restrictions on this right may be necessary to respect the rights and reputation of other persons, or to protect public safety, order, health or morality. By prohibiting the unauthorised disclosure of information revealing or tending to reveal a potential, current or former human source relationship, the Bill may limit the right of freedom of expression in section 15 of the Charter.

However, in accordance with section 15(3) of the Charter, I am satisfied that the offences of unauthorised disclosure in the Bill are lawful restrictions on a person's rights under section 15 that is reasonably necessary to protect the rights of other persons. Accordingly, I consider the unauthorised disclosure offences to be compatible with the right to freedom of expression.

The Commission recommended the creation of these offences, given ‘the critical need to protect the identities and safety of human sources.’⁵ If disclosure of such information was permitted under the Bill, there would be a real risk of retaliation against the person, endangering their rights to life, security and privacy.

The scope of the unauthorised disclosure offence is narrowly confined in its application to information that reveals or is likely to reveal a person’s potential, current or former human source relationship with Victoria Police. This ensures the offence targets information that poses the greatest risk to a person’s safety if disclosed, rather than broad categories of information which might not necessarily reveal a person’s particular relationship with Victoria Police (e.g. a person’s name or location alone).

Consistent with the offence under section 30 of the Assumed Identities Act, the unauthorised disclosure offence applies only to a person who reveals information about *another person’s* relationship with Victoria Police. That is, the offence does not capture disclosure of information by a person that reveals *they* could be, are, or were previously a human source. This ensures the offence does not unreasonably infringe on the freedom of expression of those it is specifically designed to protect.

Additionally, the exceptions to the offence included in the Bill ensure that information about Victoria Police’s use of human sources can be disclosed where there is a legitimate reason to do so, or where disclosure is otherwise permitted by law. Circumstances in which disclosure will be permitted include where:

- a person wishes to make a public interest disclosure to IBAC about a member of Victoria Police personnel engaged in the human source management program, or
- the use of human sources is required to be disclosed in criminal proceedings.

To ensure the exceptions to the offence continue to appropriately capture reasonable and justified disclosures, the Bill will enable regulations to prescribe further exceptions to the offence. As noted above, the exceptions to the offence ensure it remains focused on protecting the safety of people who could potentially be, are currently, or have previously been registered as human sources, rather than unreasonably infringing on freedom of expression around Victoria Police’s use of human sources. In my opinion, the Bill therefore appropriately balances the interest in protecting the safety of human sources with the Charter rights to freedom of expression.

The Hon. Anthony Carbines MP
Minister for Police
Minister for Crime Prevention
Minister for Racing

¹ Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants, *Final Report*, 30 November 2020, volume III, 131.

² Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants, *Final Report*, 30 November 2020, volume III, 131.

³ See, for example, *Re an application under the Major Crime (Investigative Powers) Act 2004* (2009) 24 VR 415, [162]–[163].

⁴ Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants, *Final Report*, 30 November 2020, volume III, 138.

⁵ Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants, *Final Report*, 30 November 2020, *Final Report*, volume III, 138.

Second reading

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (10:33): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I ask that my second-reading speech be incorporated into *Hansard*.

Incorporated speech as follows:

Introduction

The Human Source Management Bill 2023 (**the Bill**) is an important step to fulfil the Victorian Government’s commitment to implement all recommendations of the Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants (**the Commission**).

This Bill delivers recommendations 8–18, 44–56 and 58 of the Commission by establishing a legislative framework to regulate Victoria Police’s use of human sources.

The Bill is the first of its kind in Australia. It sets out the process for the registration, use and management of Victoria Police's human sources and establishes an external oversight model to ensure that human sources are used in an ethical and justifiable manner.

I note that the Bill is substantially the same as the Bill of the same name that was introduced to the Legislative Assembly on 16 August 2022, which lapsed upon expiry of the last Parliament. Apart from minor technical amendments, the only substantive change that has been made to the Bill is to update the default commencement date from 30 June 2024 to 30 September 2024. The updated commencement date reflects the time that has passed since the Bill's initial introduction into Parliament.

The Commission's recommendations

The Government announced the establishment of the Commission on 3 December 2018. This announcement followed the publication of the High Court's decision in *AB v CD, EF v CD* [2018] HCA 58, which revealed former criminal defence barrister, Ms Nicola Maree Gobbo, was a registered Victoria Police human source.

The Commission delivered its final report containing 111 recommendations on 30 November 2020. On 7 May 2021, the Government released its response to the Commission's final report and reiterated its commitment to implement the Commission's recommendations.

The Commission found that while human sources play a critical role in investigating and preventing crime, the use of a person as a human source can also create substantial risks. Victoria Police's use of Ms Gobbo as a human source exposed systemic issues within Victoria Police and had far-reaching and detrimental consequences for the Victorian justice system.

The Commission identified that the covert nature of the human source relationship increases the risks of Victoria Police officers engaging in corruption and misconduct and can expose individuals to significant safety risks. Using human sources with access to privileged information can also undermine public trust in important professional relationships, such as the relationship between a lawyer and their client.

The Commission noted that while Victoria Police has made significant progress in updating its internal human source management policies since the Commission, Victoria Police's internal policies are insufficient on their own to prevent the recurrence of the events that gave rise to the Commission. In contrast with other covert powers exercised by Victoria Police, there is no statutory regulation or independent external oversight of Victoria Police's human source program.

The Commission emphasised the importance of a clear legal framework to facilitate the effective use of human sources to investigate and prevent criminal activity, while simultaneously ensuring that their use is ethical, proportionate and justified. The Commission also emphasised that independent, external oversight is an important check and balance on the use of police powers, ensuring that Victoria Police is held accountable while maintaining public trust and confidence.

The Commission therefore recommended that the Government introduce legislation to regulate the use and management of human sources by Victoria Police and establish an external oversight regime.

I now turn to the Bill.

Registration and management processes

The Bill requires Victoria Police to go through a formal registration process before they can use a person as a human source. Victoria Police is required to register a person as a human source if Victoria Police wishes to use the person to gather information or provide assistance to Victoria Police, and the person has a reasonable expectation that their identity or relationship with Victoria Police will be kept confidential.

The purpose of the registration process prescribed in the Bill is to ensure a senior officer within Victoria Police formally assesses whether using a person as a human source is appropriate and justified. To achieve this, the Bill includes robust safeguards in the registration process, including requiring:

- registration decisions to be made by an officer whose seniority aligns with the level of risk posed by the registration
- the decision-maker to be satisfied that the registration of the person as a human source is necessary to achieve a legitimate law enforcement purpose and that any risks have been identified and can be adequately managed
- the person's informed consent to be registered as a human source to be obtained prior to registration, and
- appropriate boundaries to be set for the human source relationship, including establishing the purpose of the registration and any conditions to be placed on the registration.

The Bill has been carefully constructed to recognise the numerous ways in which people provide information to police, to ensure it does not inappropriately capture circumstances that do not pose the level of risks inherent with using human sources. The Bill does not require a person to be registered as a human source who falls within other categories of people who provide information to Victoria Police such as witnesses and anonymous tip-offs. A person who approaches Victoria Police to confidentially volunteer information on a discrete occasion is also not a human source under the Bill, unless they are reasonably expected to have access to privileged information, are under the age of 18, or have a serious medical or mental health condition.

The Bill prohibits Victoria Police from using a person as if they are a human source unless the person has been registered as a human source. The Bill also prohibits Victoria Police from using a human source for a different purpose from the purpose approved at registration.

Reportable human sources

The Bill requires Victoria Police to apply to register certain categories of people as 'reportable human sources' because they are particularly vulnerable or using them as a human source poses a heightened level of risk to the administration of justice. The Bill specifies more stringent registration requirements for reportable human sources, including approval by a more senior officer within Victoria Police, requirements to consider legal, medical or other specialist advice, and involvement of the Public Interest Monitor (**the PIM**) in registration decisions.

Stricter registration requirements for people who are reasonably expected to have access to privileged information

The Bill requires a person to be registered as a reportable human source if they are reasonably expected to have access to privileged information. This reflects the significant risk to the administration of justice if Victoria Police use a human source to obtain information in breach of obligations of privilege, as demonstrated by the use of Ms Nicola Gobbo as a human source.

If a person is reasonably expected to have access to privileged information, the Bill requires the decision to register the person as a human source to be made by the Chief Commissioner or a delegate of or above the rank of Assistant Commissioner. The Bill also requires the Chief Commissioner or their delegate to consider formal legal advice and any recommendations by the PIM when making a registration decision.

The Bill only allows Victoria Police to intentionally use a human source in breach of obligations of privilege in very rare circumstances. If the person will be registered as a human source for the purpose of obtaining privileged information, the Bill only permits registration if the Chief Commissioner or their delegate is satisfied that there is a serious threat to national security, the community, or the life and welfare of a person, and that the information cannot be obtained through any other reasonable means.

Stricter registration requirements and additional safeguards for people under the age of 18 and people with a serious medical or mental health condition

The Bill also requires a person to be registered as a reportable human source if they are under the age of 18, or they have a serious medical or mental health condition. This requirement reflects the additional welfare and human rights risks associated with using people in these categories as human sources.

If children and people with a serious medical or mental health condition provide information to Victoria Police, it is important that the Bill allows them to be registered as human sources. Registration will ensure Victoria Police can give children and vulnerable adults certain protections, including concealing their identity and ensuring their relationship with Victoria Police is overseen by the PIM and the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (**IBAC**).

If a person is under the age of 18 or has a serious medical or mental health condition, the Bill will permit only the Chief Commissioner or their delegate at or above the rank of Assistant Commissioner to make the decision to register the person as a human source. The Bill requires the consideration of advice from a medical professional or other specialist, as well as any recommendations made by the PIM, before registration.

Importantly, the Bill includes additional protections for children. The Bill only permits a person under the age of 18 to be registered as a human source for the purpose of investigating a serious offence, or where there is a serious threat to national security, the community, or the life and welfare of a person, and the information cannot be obtained through any other reasonable means. The Bill also prevents Victoria Police from approaching a child aged 14 years or younger for the purposes of recruiting them as a human source or tasking them to seek out further information. The Bill entitles all children to have a lawyer and a parent, guardian or independent person present during key interactions with Victoria Police.

Streamlined processes in emergencies or urgent circumstances

The Bill recognises the need for Victoria Police to act quickly in emergencies to respond to imminent and serious threats to the community, national security, or the life and welfare of a person. The Bill includes a

streamlined process for registering a person as a human source in these circumstances, allowing the registration decision to be made verbally and removing requirements to obtain legal, medical or specialist advice before registration.

As soon as the emergency circumstances have passed, Victoria Police must deactivate or suspend the registration, and cannot continue to use the person as a human source until they are re-registered through the standard registration process for either reportable or non-reportable human sources.

To ensure that the emergency registration process is only used where appropriate, the Bill requires Victoria Police to notify the PIM within two business days of all emergency registrations of a person as a reportable human source. The Bill then empowers the PIM to make retrospective recommendations to Victoria Police about the appropriateness of the registration. The Bill also requires Victoria Police to notify IBAC of all emergency registrations on a quarterly basis. The Bill then empowers IBAC to select a sample of emergency registrations to assess whether Victoria Police has complied with the Bill and whether the emergency registrations should have been made.

Normally, the decision to register a human source must be made in writing. The Bill will allow verbal registrations of non-reportable human sources if a person provides time-critical information that would assist police to respond in urgent circumstances. Like emergency registrations, urgent registrations will be reviewed by IBAC quarterly.

Requirements for ongoing management of human sources

Once a human source has been registered, the Bill recognises the importance of ongoing risk management throughout a human source's involvement with Victoria Police.

The Bill therefore requires Victoria Police to conduct regular reviews of a human source's registration to ensure it remains appropriate and justified. The Bill requires a human source to be deactivated after 6 months if they are a reportable human source, or 12 months if they are a non-reportable human source. However, Victoria Police can re-register a human source after these periods in line with the risk assessment, decision-making and oversight processes in the Bill.

The Bill also includes safeguards if a human source unexpectedly provides privileged information during their registration, or if a human source develops a serious medical or mental health condition. In these circumstances, the Bill requires Victoria Police to immediately quarantine the information the human source provided and either deactivate the human source or suspend their registration until a fresh registration application is approved.

External oversight

The Bill also establishes an external oversight regime involving tiered levels of oversight by the PIM and IBAC across all human source activity involving Victoria Police. The Bill empowers the PIM to be involved in Victoria Police's decision-making process for registering reportable human sources. The Bill also empowers IBAC to retrospectively monitor Victoria Police's compliance with the human source management framework, including the Bill, any regulations and Victoria Police's internal policies. Finally, the Bill empowers the Victorian Inspectorate to have oversight of some of the PIM and IBAC's oversight powers under the Bill.

PIM involvement in registration decisions

The Bill gives the PIM new functions and powers to support their oversight role. The Bill gives the PIM new functions to:

- inform Victoria Police's decisions to register a person as a reportable human source by assessing registration applications and making recommendations about whether the registration is appropriate and justified, and
- provide retrospective oversight of Victoria Police's decisions to register a person as a reportable human source in an emergency by assessing the registration application and making recommendations to Victoria Police on whether the person should have been registered.

The Bill places certain obligations on Victoria Police to assist the PIM to perform these functions. The Bill requires Victoria Police to notify the PIM of an application to register a person as a reportable human source, provide the PIM with all information relevant to that application, and provide any other reasonable assistance the PIM might require. The Bill also empowers the PIM to ask questions, require Victoria Police personnel to provide information, and share information with IBAC.

IBAC compliance monitoring

The Bill also gives IBAC new functions and powers to support its oversight role.

Under the Bill, IBAC will retrospectively monitor Victoria Police's compliance with the Bill and Victoria Police's internal policies and procedures in relation to the registration, use and management of human sources. These functions include conducting regular inspections, receiving regular reports, and making recommendations to Victoria Police to support compliance with the Bill.

The Bill empowers IBAC to conduct regular inspections of Victoria Police records relating to human sources. As part of each inspection, the Bill requires IBAC to select a sample of human sources and assess whether the decisions relating to each of those human sources complied with the Bill and should have been made.

The Bill also requires Victoria Police to provide regular reports to IBAC about the receipt of privileged information from human sources and any material contraventions of the human source management framework. A material contravention is any breach of the human source management framework that is likely to undermine the integrity of Victoria Police.

After receiving these reports, IBAC must assess whether Victoria Police has put in place adequate measures to manage the risks associated with receiving privileged information and whether they have taken appropriate steps to prevent a recurrence of the material contravention.

To support its compliance monitoring functions, the Bill gives IBAC broad powers to require Victoria Police personnel to provide it with information or assistance, and to make any recommendations IBAC considers appropriate.

Victorian Inspectorate oversight of PIM and IBAC's coercive powers

The Bill gives both the PIM and IBAC the power to compel a member of Victoria Police personnel to provide information to support their oversight functions. While unlikely, it is possible that the information a member of Victoria Police personnel must provide may incriminate them. To protect the human rights of Victoria Police personnel, the Bill ensures that any self-incriminating information a person is compelled to provide cannot be used in legal proceedings against that person. The Bill also requires the PIM and IBAC to notify the Victorian Inspectorate whenever they exercise this power to compel information. The Bill empowers the Victorian Inspectorate to make recommendations to the PIM and IBAC to ensure the powers are only exercised lawfully.

Protecting sensitive information in the oversight regime

The Bill also includes safeguards to ensure that sensitive information that Victoria Police provides to the PIM and IBAC is handled securely. The Bill requires the PIM and IBAC to return documents to Victoria Police as soon as reasonably practicable after performing their functions.

Reporting functions

The Bill requires the PIM and IBAC to prepare annual reports to the Attorney-General on the performance of their functions. The PIM and IBAC may also report directly to the Attorney-General, at any time considered appropriate, on any matters relating to the performance of their duties and functions.

The Bill requires the Attorney-General to table these reports in the Victorian Parliament and publish them on a Victorian Government website.

Given the sensitivity of human source information overseen by the PIM and IBAC, the Bill prohibits sensitive information from being included in reports to the Attorney-General, including information that could identify a human source. The Chief Commissioner of Police must also be provided with the reports and may recommend sensitive information be removed before they are provided to the Attorney-General.

Criminal offences

The Bill creates new offences to protect the safety of human sources and the integrity of investigations involving human sources. These offences prohibit the unauthorised disclosure of human source information, which includes information that is likely to reveal that a person is a human source, or has previously been registered as a human source, or that Victoria Police has applied to register the person as a human source. The Bill includes a more serious offence if a person discloses human source information with the intention of prejudicing a criminal investigation, intelligence-gathering, or a criminal prosecution.

The Bill provides appropriate exceptions to these offences. For example, it will not be an offence to disclose human source information when required to in criminal proceedings or between law enforcement agencies.

Conclusion

This Bill introduces a comprehensive regulatory framework to ensure Victoria Police uses human sources in an ethical and justifiable manner, subject to external oversight.

The Bill includes robust safeguards where Victoria Police wishes to use vulnerable people as human sources or where the use of a person as a human source could result in a breach of privilege.

The Bill represents another important step forward in increasing confidence in Victoria's justice system and ensuring that the events that led to the Commission can never occur again.

I commend the Bill to the house.

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (10:33): I move:

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned for two weeks. Debate adjourned until Wednesday 22 February.

Address to Parliament

Governor's speech

Address-in-reply

Debate resumed on motion of Martha Haylett:

That the following address, in reply to the speech of the Governor to both houses of Parliament, be agreed to by this house.

Governor:

We, the Legislative Assembly of Victoria assembled in Parliament, wish to express our loyalty to our Sovereign and to thank you for the speech which you have made to the Parliament.

Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (10:34): I rise to contribute to the address-in-reply to the Governor, and in so doing I wish to acknowledge the Wurundjeri people as the traditional owners of much of the land of the district of Yan Yean. I also acknowledge the Taungurung people as traditional owners of the northern edge of the district. Where the lands of these two peoples meet you will find Mount Disappointment. That is exactly what Hume and Hovell did in 1824. They climbed the mountain hoping for a view of Port Phillip Bay, but their view was obstructed by dense tree growth. I am assuming they were already having a bad day; they named it Mount Disappointment. We still do not have bay views in Yan Yean, but if you were to climb Mount Disappointment today and look over Yan Yean, you could take a picture-perfect snapshot of modern Victoria: from the rural pastures and hamlets in the foothills of Mount Disappointment, punctuated by Whittlesea township, through the green wedge and the growing suburbs of Mernda, Donnybrook and Doreen, and down into the more established areas of Plenty and Yarrambat.

There is no label that can neatly define or describe my electorate – a patchwork of evergreen acreage, and yet simultaneously suburban, some suburbs the fastest growing in the state. Pockets of affluence sit alongside those struggling to scrape by. We are both young and old, established and emerging, Australian by birth and Australian by choice. It is home to people like Josh, a plasterer who has turned his hand to running a local coffee shop to support his family; Gary, who spends many hours each week volunteering at the Whittlesea SES and drove ambulances during the pandemic; Harpreet, an accountant who commutes more than an hour to work each day; Heather, the first-ever female apprentice in this house; and Maggie, who has sweeping plans to build an arboretum in the green wedge on her property.

Many of us have watched the paddocks in our area progressively turn into housing estates – the yellow canola giving way to Colorbond. Where once crops grew, now community grows – community because for all our differences we are connected by a common thread. People are determined to build a life for themselves and their families. If you ask people why they are working so hard, the answer is always the same: 'For my children'. Yan Yean is defined by people that work hard and give so much of themselves to their jobs, their families, their sporting clubs, the local fire brigade. The developers can build an estate, but only we can build community. I would like to thank the people of Yan Yean for putting their faith in me to join them in that effort.

The families here are much like the family I grew up in. Mum and Dad ran a newsagency for 20-odd years. Dad would go to bed early each night before rising in the dark to steal around the streets in an old Suzuki soft-top, throwing papers into the yards of the sleeping. Sun-up, sundown, seven days a week they sold papers and scratchies, magazines and envelopes. Sometimes they were the only ones that an elderly person spoke to that day – and they took that honour seriously.

In a small filing cabinet behind the counter, Dad had photocopies of a hand-drawn map he would give to lost motorists. You see, the newsagency was the first place where it was easy to stop if you had taken the wrong exit off an earlier highway. People who had lost their way would pull over and ask for directions. It happened often enough that Dad was ready with a map and some encouragement to get them back on their right path. I thank my parents for the times they have helped me back onto my own narrow path, for showing me the dignity of labour and that it is a privilege to perform an act of service, no matter how simple or humble.

Growing up in a family running a small business, where Mum and Dad would sit up in bed at night talking about how they would manage the bills, being humble was unavoidable some days – like Fridays, sports days, the days I tried in various cross-legged poses or by lagging behind to hide my shoes. From Kmart for \$20 they might be considered ironically cool now, but at the time they were just canvas and rubber and clown like. I would glance at the other kids' brandname shoes and rearrange my legs on the bus heading to netball, pushing my feet further underneath the seat in front. In grade 6 there could be nothing worse – so I threw them away. I slipped them off and flung them into the bushes of a house on the short walk home from school. It took me a couple of days to tell Mum about my missing shoes. I probably did not pick the best time: Monday afternoon when Mum had returned home tired from her six-day-work, seven-day-worry job at the newsagency. I told Mum, and she went to Kmart and bought me the exact same pair of shoes. I know a lot of kids had it hard growing up, some with no shoes at all, but I share this story as a tribute to my mum, who worked hard to give me the best – not the best shoes but the best values. Mum and Dad in their retirement still serve the community, volunteering with Meals on Wheels, at the local hospice and in their church congregation. I thank my parents for teaching me the meaning of the good life and that it cannot be bought.

Their example had a lot to do with the choice I made when I was 18 or so to live a life of service. Over the last 20 and a bit years that choice has taken me to homelessness and family violence shelters, supporting women to get back on their feet; to Kakadu, running a homelessness prevention program; to Myanmar, where I negotiated with a man in an army uniform to allow us access to build a village school in rebel militia territory; to its Rohingya displaced persons camps, where my chief goal was to check that people with disability could get the same outcomes from our programs as other community members; to Papua New Guinea, where I journeyed with people over mountains and through food shortages and their tired resignation at the services they received and where I saw their joyous celebration when, with their own hands, they built a better life for their families and communities through better schools, more adults who can now read and write, bigger and better crops and a stronger voice to government; to Indonesia, where we formed an organisation to support families, build up their small businesses and push government to support the priorities identified by communities themselves; and most exotic of all, to the Victorian public service, where I crunched the numbers for the team working on treaty, truth and justice. Although all of these experiences are each so different, there is a common theme: building community but also ensuring them a voice, a genuine say on what their future could and should look like. I carry that same determination with me as the representative for the people of the Yan Yean district. There are many issues on which their voices deserve to be heard.

On planning, our Labor government has made important reforms: ensuring air and light in apartments and accessibility standards in new builds and giving renters the right to make their house a home. But we need to do more, ensuring not just livable homes but livable communities. Kinder returned last week. I met a mum whose child has started kinder in a neighbouring estate, but to get there there is no footpath and no bus. Instead, every morning and every afternoon she bundles her little one in and out of Ubers. Kinder is free, but getting there is not always easy. It is why we need stronger community-

centred development, making sure that developers, councils and state government are doing their best for communities, listening to communities and ensuring their voices reach the nexus of decision-making. Make no mistake: increasing supply is critical to making sure more Victorians have the security of a home, but it cannot be at the expense of access to services.

As a labour movement, we fought hard for the 8-hour day, but for too many families in Yan Yean the promise of the 8-hour day is being compromised by long commutes. Mums and dads who work long days only to spend even longer in the car or the train do it because they want the best for their kids, but it means they miss out on seeing them. This impels us to continue this government's proud record of infrastructure investment, building the roads and rail our growing communities need. But it also means building local economies too, ensuring opportunity extends beyond the boundary of the CBD and that communities like mine are centres of thriving activity, not just outposts for commuting workers to occasionally get a rest. We must find new ways to invigorate local businesses and local jobs, and because we are a Labor government, they need to be decent, secure and well-paid jobs, jobs that enable people to do more than merely pay the bills – to build a better life for their families.

There are many reasons I am Labor, but without doubt one of the biggest is my big brother, Mark. Mum and Dad raised six of us – five girls, one boy. My sisters and I flew the coop at the usual time, with my sisters going on to do incredible things. They are all at this exact moment in classrooms nurturing young minds, and I am so proud to come from a family of educators. But until recently Mark was living at home, and like all of us, Mum and Dad are getting older, and they just were not able to keep caring for Mark in the way that he needed. It was time, at 50 years of age, for him to fly the coop too. For every family that loves someone with a significant disability, the difficulty of this situation and the slow march to the inevitable decision can be filled with dread. But it was made so much harder for my family by the agency that was meant to help. Like many, Mum and Dad were forced to fight the former Liberal government's NDIS and wait in increasingly desperate circumstances for the agency that broke their own guidelines for responsiveness, fighting to make sure my brother had access to supported accommodation. Eventually my brother and parents won, but they should never have been made to fight.

Last July, a few months after the federal election which saw Labor returned to office, Mum was chatting with me and my sisters about Mark and about how well he was doing in his new home. I will be honest with you: Mum is not traditionally a Labor voter. She will tell you that herself. But in that conversation and in an offhand comment, she defined for me Labor's difference. 'With the new government,' she said, 'it feels like we don't have to beg anymore.' I am proud of this government's efforts in this space, proud of the record investment in special schools, doubly proud that students with disabilities and their families shaped our policy priorities. But I will be working hard for young adults with disability and their families in Yan Yean because I know we can do more. We can do more for the young person I know who wants to work, who has so much to give but just needs the opportunity. We can do more for the mum I spoke to at the Whittlesea market who told me that she wants her son to have the chance to make friends, and we can do more for families like my own, who can feel that each day is a battle. The real measure of this government should not be whether or not we ask people to beg. It should be whether we give them what they need. People with disability and their families deserve so much better. They deserve our collective commitment and our political courage, and every day in this place I will be fighting for it.

There are many people to thank: Garreth, my husband, my friend and my greatest champion, and my daughters Greta and April, whose very existence is a light that forces out all darkness. Mike and Monica Jones, who keep everything running smoothly and whose cheerful encouragement is a balm. I thank Rob Mitchell for his support and guidance and the example he has set of keeping your feet on the ground while having aspirations for your community that reach the clouds. Kobe Hay, who is steadfast and true; James McDonald, who always has a plan; Dan Welsh, whose resilience made each day fresh; Danielle Green, who understands the importance of community and worked hard to deliver for Yan Yean. I would also like to thank the mighty team behind me of Avtar Singh, Spiro and Kerry

Patras, Jaswinder Singh, Tony Comley, Peter, Jordan, Jarrod, Deb, Lynne, Mitchel, Elizabeth, John, Geoff, Andrew, Gopal, Leo, Ravneet, George, Raymond, Maryam, Brooke, Debra, Ged, Mike, Hemraj, Leanne, Arshdeep, Hailey, Mary, Samuel, Diogo, Kasey, Cath, Sacha, Pauline, Raghu, Tom Joseph, Mandeep, Gurdarshan, Simarjeet, Mandeep Kaur, Jordan, Dave, Pauline, Jeni and John.

My thanks to my caucus colleagues for so warmly welcoming me in this place. My thanks to the Premier, who for the past eight years has led a government defined by delivery, a government that gets things done. As the member for Yan Yean, it is an example I intend to emulate. I choose every day to ensure my community has the infrastructure and investments it deserves: great schools, quality health care, reliable road and rail. Perhaps most important is the business of community building – not achieved with bricks or cement alone but reliant on seeing our area's diversity as an asset, our connections a strength and our voices important. There can be no disappointment in that. The people of Yan Yean are working hard for their future. They have a representative working hard for it too.

Members applauded.

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (10:54): It is a great honour that I stand before you in the 60th Parliament of Victoria as the second member for Euroa, and it is with great pride that I also stand before you as the mother of Arthur and Quinn, the wife of David and the representative of the incredible community in which I work and live. I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands we meet on, as well as those I represent in the electorate of Euroa: the Wurundjeri, Taungurung and Yorta Yorta people. I pay my respects to elders past and present and acknowledge that the wisdom they have known and shared for thousands of years still has value for our modern world. May we all find ways to walk gently and compassionately on these ancient lands.

The land of the Euroa electorate spans more than 11,500 square kilometres of rivers and ranges that a community of 55,000 regional Victorians call home. Our electorate is a place of ancient and modern significance, from Aboriginal rock art, scar trees and cutting stones to colonial and goldmining histories of the towns of Kilmore, Murchison and Rushworth and from the military training camp of Puckapunyal to the creative art haven of Benalla. It is also home to agriculture, family-run enterprises and global industry innovators, from croppers in Colbinabbin to fruit and dairy farmers in the Goulburn Valley to livestock and thoroughbred breeders throughout our entire electorate.

I am standing here today because I love our region, our community and the people who call it home. These people are my people. My children are fourth-generation Seymourians. Their great-grandparents, Muriel and Robert Beale, migrated to Australia as self-described ten-pound Poms, with little more than a suitcase in their hands and the hope for a better life in their hearts. They settled in Seymour with their only child, my dad, in 1952. They found jobs at Woolcord knitting mill and on the railways, where they would spend most of their working lives, and thanks to the rent-to-buy Housing Commission scheme in place at the time, they were eventually able to buy their home on the hill. The Seymour community gave my grandparents safety, support and an opportunity to provide their son with a good life and education. I stand here with the hope that I can repay that debt and give back to a community that has given my family so much.

On my mother's side you will find more proud country folk. Mum's dad, John Jack McConachie, was a grazier on the iconic merino station Ben Avon in outback New South Wales. Grandad's presence and character, his value for hard work and his deep roots in farming and agriculture loomed large in our family, and his legacy has left an enduring mark on my life. My parents, Ian and Michele Beale, raised my three sisters and me, working their hearts out every day to provide every possible opportunity they could to us.

Dad has always been a somewhat unconventional mentor in my life. He said not to be a journalist, so it was only natural that I should go on to study media and communications at Deakin University, majoring in journalism. I began my career at Fairfax Media as a regional reporter for *Stock & Land*, the masthead known as the Bible of the bush because of its reputation as a balanced and trusted voice

for regional Victoria. I was eventually promoted to national agricultural reporter at Fairfax Media and then editor of *Stock & Land*. My career has always been and will continue to be as a storyteller for regional Victorians. As a journalist I shared the unique experiences of country Australians with the rest of the nation. I reported on the front line of major issues like the Indonesian live export ban, animal activist trespass laws, biosecurity threats and more recently the attacks on our CFA. I witnessed some of the most devastating stories in regional communities come about as a result of decisions made by a government that was out of touch with the people and families living in those communities – decisions that prioritised politics and what looked good on paper over people and that prioritised votes over lives and livelihoods that were on the line. My career has been driven by integrity, compassion and a strong set of ethics, and I worked without fear or favour. I intend to hold tightly onto these same values as I step into public life.

My dad also said not to be a farmer, so it was only natural that while pursuing a career in journalism my husband David and I independently bought a farm in the southern Strathbogie region of Tarcombe. We are proud farmers who are focused on ethical and sustainable production, but we ultimately chose this life in the hope that we could give our children the same country upbringing we both enjoyed in Mansfield. We are so grateful to have the opportunity to raise our kids in this community, but we have also experienced firsthand that living regionally comes with a cost.

Right across country Victoria our communities are living with inferior health care, lower than average educational outcomes and deteriorating infrastructure, and the unprecedented pressure on our resources is being exacerbated by a population shift out of Melbourne and into the regions. There is an unspoken toll that you pay to live outside of Melbourne, and that toll is a clear disparity in the resources and support provided by the government to regional Victorians compared to our city counterparts. Living close to Seymour, it is heartbreaking to see the same social issues playing out today that my dad experienced there when he was a child. According to the *Dropping off the Edge* report, which looks at social data from the last 15 years, the Euroa electorate is home to some of the most locationally disadvantaged communities in Victoria, with Seymour and Benalla consistently reported as having some of the highest rates of domestic violence, child abuse and poverty in the state.

Despite the social issues, our community is full of incredible, supportive and resourceful people. In Benalla a dedicated group of locals have founded the Tomorrow Today Foundation, where they work tirelessly to develop new and innovative programs to break generational disadvantage. After the recent floods it was the Seymour Football Netball Club who rallied and inspired hundreds of volunteers to clean local homes and businesses. They wielded mops, hoses and scrubbing brushes for weeks, and they lifted sandbags, mouldy carpets and soggy couches from living rooms to nature strips until the job was done. It is not for nothing that country Victorians have a reputation for being resilient – a word that gets thrown around more than I would like. Everywhere you look you can find examples of regional communities banding together and supporting each other – not just in times of crisis, but every day. For too long these communities have relied on their famous resilience to navigate locational disadvantage and multilayered social issues because they have no other option. But we must not leave them to face these complex challenges alone, no matter how hard they are to solve.

As a state, we have work to do. We must expand the investment in our regional road network beyond simply repairing flood damage. We need ongoing funding to ensure roads right across regional Victoria are maintained at a safe standard. We know the current state of roads is causing serious and fatal road accidents, so we must see priority given to road projects like the Kilmore bypass, which is desperately needed simply to keep the town functioning and prevent the crumbling of one of Victoria's most historically significant towns.

We must address the lack of educational opportunities in regions. In Euroa our schools are bursting at the seams, in Broadford our students are packed into old and outdated facilities and the rebuild of Seymour secondary college remains unfinished and unfunded. Like many communities, we are also experiencing year-long waitlists for childcare that leave regional families who rely on two incomes to survive – which is most of them – with no options.

As an urgent priority we must improve regional health care. Our hospitals are underfunded, ambulance response times are appalling and the barriers to accessing mental health services are extreme. These barriers, the high costs and long waitlists are disproportionately impacting the most vulnerable in our communities. Our community-owned hospital, Euroa Health, has begged the government for support and been ignored by minister after minister. Their closure would leave a gaping hole in local health care.

And regional maternity care – this one is personal for me. Three years ago my local hospital lacked the resources to provide a safe birth for me and my first child Arthur. I was forced to endure the indignity of labouring in an examination room with no door, fully open for passers-by to see, because no bed was available to me, and after hours of labouring with no privacy I was left with no choice but to have a caesarean to deliver my son. I had no option but to undergo major surgery – not because my baby or I needed it but because a lack of critical resources at the hospital meant there was no guarantee of a safe birth by any other means. After this experience I resolved to fight for better. I became a community adviser working to improve health and safety outcomes for patients at a local hospital under pressure from extreme population growth and negligent government support because, unfortunately, my birth story is not unusual. I have had countless conversations with women just like me, women like Ellen from Nagambie and Meg from Heathcote. Meg had the first baby born at her local hospital in 30 years. She initially presented at a larger regional hospital in labour but was turned away because they were too busy. Meg and her baby almost died at her local hospital because they simply did not have the equipment needed to appropriately care for them. The critical lack of resources in our regional communities is very genuinely putting lives at risk. It took me six months to look at the physical scar I was left with thanks to an underfunded regional health system that was pushed to failure. I stand here today still bearing that scar, and I stand here today more resolved than ever to fight for more and better.

Every aspect of regional Victoria's health system is deteriorating. Every week I hear worrying stories about the demand on our health workers, with staff shortages and endemic burnout – clear signs of a health sector under immense stress. And while COVID has certainly exacerbated the health crisis, the pandemic merely exposed the vulnerabilities that already existed. While I am here I will be relentless in my pursuit of a government that prioritises people over politics and lives over votes, because I believe that if the cost of living regionally is the lives of Victorians, then the cost is too high. I want the record to show that every day I am in this place I will fight to address the entrenched disadvantage that deprives regional communities of the basic resources and opportunities that underpin social and economic wellbeing. I will fight to leave a better legacy for the young people and future generations of our electorate so that my children and yours can choose to live in our regional communities without disadvantage.

Regional Victorians make up a quarter of the state's population. They produce the food and fibre that fuels our agricultural economy and feeds our families, and they do it all while bearing the worst impacts of our country's inevitable natural disasters. Our great state cannot function without thriving regional communities, and yet we know that we are receiving an inadequate cut of government funding. I proudly stand today with my Nationals colleagues, representing everyday country Victorians, people who need radical common sense and radically pragmatic solutions for the challenges they face. I am here not for the left or for the right but for what is best for our people.

No first speech is complete without a few acknowledgements and thankyou's, and so here are mine. To my peers across the aisle, I look forward to our robust debate – respectfully, intelligently and with dignity. I genuinely believe that we are all here with the hope of improving the lives of Victorians, and I look forward to working together with you to do just that. To the campaign workers, selfless friends, volunteers and party members who supported me on this journey and made this a possibility, thank you for being by my side and for shouldering so much of the work that has led me here. To my predecessor, mentor and friend Steph Ryan, your gardening, cooking, parenting and political advice is unparalleled. Many young women are in this chamber because of you. Thank you for showing us that a powerful, empathetic voice that puts people ahead of politics is what Victorians want, need and deserve.

To my team, Mitch Itter, Hannah Price, Guy Barbour and Adam Scott, thank you for your professional and personal support and for the platform you have given me. Thank you also to my yellow and gold family, Bill Sykes, Frank Deane, John Gribben, Max Perry, Sandra and Gerard O'Sullivan, James Brook and the late Bruce Nicholls, for proving that grassroots advocacy with community running through your veins is what politics is truly about. And to my in-laws, Jenny and Ross, thank you for your care for our family and your support for our ventures, no matter how outlandish and ill advised. To my Uncle Mark and Aunty Clare, your patience, love and generosity in sharing your farm in Nyngan with us every school holidays has had a defining impact on my career. You taught me how food was grown and what it takes to get it to our plates. You instilled in me a great reverence and respect for the act of producing something for the benefit of others. My love of farming and everything that has come about because of that love started with you.

To my three sisters – Alex, our role model in work, life and love; Prudence, our strong one, the most courageous person I know; and Clementine, our fearless one, determined in everything you take on – thank you for your friendship and wisdom and for instilling in me a sense of healthy competition. I am thrilled that from this day forward the official record of *Hansard* will reflect that I am indeed the favourite daughter.

Mum, you are the glue to our family glitter. Your eternal optimism and zest for life are contagious. You are the original, the corporate powerhouse, the earthmother and the captain of all of life's adventures. Thank you for teaching us how to love deeply and live richly.

Dad, your final piece of advice was that politics is a dirty game and not to do it. Thank you for your support even as I did all the things you said not to. Your rebellious streak is in my blood. Your stubbornness, positivity and tireless work ethic are also in my blood. I know they will serve me well.

To my children Arthur and Quinn, you are and will always be my greatest achievements. Thank you for giving me daily motivation, inspiration and the very best reason to fight for a better future.

And to my husband David, my calm in the storm, my steady hand, thank you for stepping up for our family and thank you for the sacrifices you have made so that I can stand here today for our community. We are a team in every sense of the word, and I am here because of you.

Finally, to the people of the Euroa electorate and to my community, thank you for your trust in me and your support. It is an honour to work to protect, defend and celebrate you and the place we all call home. To you I pledge my hands to help those in need and to strengthen what is already strong, I pledge my ears to listen with compassion, I pledge my eyes to look forward with hope, I pledge my heart to share in your joys and challenges and I pledge my voice so that you may always be heard with power and determination in this place of influence.

Members applauded.

Paul MERCURIO (Hastings) (11:17): I might just say that I believe my granddaughter Grace is going to heckle me throughout my speech, and I welcome it – and of course for the next 50 years. I wish to acknowledge and pay my respects to the traditional owners of the land on which we stand today, the Wurundjeri people, and I pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. I also acknowledge the traditional owners of the land of my electorate, the Boon Wurrung people. I would like to thank the previous member for the electorate of Hastings, Mr Neale Burgess, for his 16 years of service to our community. I would also like to thank the previous member for Nepean, Mr Chris Brayne. I was looking forward to working with Chris, and I am saddened that he was not re-elected. Chris showed what you can achieve when you have a seat at the table. I am deeply grateful to the people of the electorate of Hastings who voted for me. I believe they voted for me because they wanted a seat at the table in a sitting government. They want to be part of the conversation, and now they are, because I am standing here now thanks to them and on behalf of them.

If I may, I would like to continue with my thank-yous as there are quite a few. Firstly, I would like to thank my mother Jean, who is 86 and here today, for the unconditional love that she has given me and the rest of her extended family, for her generosity of spirit, for the support she has always shown me and for the inspiration she gives me through living her life by her example. Life was certainly not easy for my mum nor for us as a family. She and my father split up back in 1969, when I was five. Dad stayed in Melbourne. Mum, with four kids, caught a train to Perth. We were going on a holiday. My holiday lasted for 13 years before I came back to Melbourne. My mum's lasted 27. If there was only one thing I could say about those 13 years it would be this: my mum always gave us a chance. Those times were pretty tough, but Mum always made sure we had the chance at an opportunity, at trying things. Whether it was singing in the choir, playing soccer, footy, surfing or, God forbid, ballet, Mum made sure we all had a shot. I remember at the age of nine, after watching an Elvis Presley movie and being rather inspired, I turned to my mum and said, 'Mum, can I do ballet?' She was so surprised the cigarette fell out of her mouth and burnt a hole in the carpet, but she gave me a shot. That drives me to be here.

I would like to thank my wife Andrea. We have only been married 35 years and have three kids and one granddaughter, and I think we are doing okay. There are many beautiful, incredible qualities that Andrea has. She is a ballerina, an artist and an amazing mum and woman. We are journeymen – we have travelled the world together, we have worked together, we have been rich together and poor together. In short we are an almost-perfect team. And the reason I say we are an almost-perfect team is because we have another 35 years together to grow, to nurture, to nourish, to learn and to love. Perfection can wait. I am enjoying the journey. That drives me to be here.

I would like to thank my three amazing daughters Elise, Emily and Erin – yes, three Es. They keep me young, they keep me on my toes, they keep me growing and they keep my mind open and active. Occasionally they laugh at my jokes, and they often tell me where I am going wrong. They always eat my food. We cook together, laugh together, sing together and cry together. I am such a better person thanks to them. It goes without saying that I feel the same way about my two sons-in-law, Jack and Ben, and now of course my granddaughter Grace. The circle of love keeps on giving. Once, when I was younger, I thought possibly love was finite and at some point I would run out of it, but I have learned you never will. Love is infinite: the more you give, the more you have to give. That drives me to be here.

My deep thanks goes to the members of the Western Port Labor branch and all of the volunteers and members of the CFMEU for the help and support given over what was a fairly gruelling campaign. My team and I could not have done it without you. I would also like to thank various members that have helped and guided me through the process of being elected: Will Fowles – for your friendship, for the support and help you have given me, for mentoring me through this process – Paul Edbrooke, Mathew Hilakari, John Mullahy, Jordan Crugnale, Tom McIntosh, federal member for Bruce Julian Hill and federal member for Dunkley Peta Murphy. To all those that reached out with a phone call or a word of support over the last year, my thanks. Lastly and most importantly I wish to thank my core team: our fly-in fly-out specialist adviser Rachel Smith; the best volunteer ever, Rebecca Stringer; media and communications expert Lukas Hogenbirk; and the most awesome campaign director, Kathryn Smith. Your passion for the labour cause, your commitment to doing the best for the community and your utter selflessness inspires me to be better, do better and work harder. That drives me to be here.

I was born in Swan Hill in 1963. My father Gus Mercurio was not a well-known actor and TV commentator then but a simple chiropractor. He was born in Milwaukee in the United States to a Sicilian father and a German mother. He did not enjoy the sort of childhood a child deserves. His father was a very hard man, an influential man in the Milwaukee fruit and vegetable markets. He was also heavily involved in the Nixon campaign, meeting with him and hosting him in Milwaukee. I was later to find out through a retired FBI agent that he was a member of the Milwaukee division of the Cosa Nostra. I remember when I was told this my head spun as I tried to truly understand what this meant. In Australia we like to romanticise some of our criminal characters, which I find difficult to comprehend, and even more so I was confronted with the fact that my own grandfather was a criminal and was involved in murder. I believe my father came to Australia to escape the life that was being

shaped for him, and I have to say Australia is a better place for him being here. I learned a lot from him. One of the best things he taught me was how to peel a clove of garlic. Some might say it is a little thing in the scheme of things, yet every time I peel garlic, which in my house is every day, I think of him and am grateful. I taught my three daughters how to peel garlic, they have taught others and I will teach Grace. It is the small things, the simple things, that are important, and we should never lose sight of that. Here in this chamber I am sure we can get lost in the big things, but they are no more important than the small things, because those small things are what keep our feet on the ground, keep us real and keep us connected to our community, family and friends. That drives me to be here.

With that in mind I ran on a platform of keeping our communities connected. It is an unfortunate fact that if you do not have a car in the electorate of Hastings, then staying connected is a very challenging experience. We are a metro region, but we have a train line that runs every two hours. We have two bus lines that run every two hours – not on the weekend and not to all parts of the community. We do not have a cross bus service on the peninsula. If we did, it would be a 25-minute service. Instead you have to catch a bus to Frankston and then back down the other side, a journey that can take two or three hours or more. My community want this changed. That drives me to be here.

I come from the wrong side of the peninsula. I come from the forgotten side. That is what most people feel on the Western Port side. And yet Western Port has so much to offer and has so much potential. The electorate of Hastings takes in the pristine French Island in Western Port Bay, the second largest bay in the state of Victoria and home to the almost 60,000-hectare Ramsar wetlands. It also takes in the suburb of Langwarrin, which is an ideal area for young families to bring up their children. It has great schools, parks, cafes, shopping and a not-so-bad public transport system. It also takes in half of the Western Port side of the peninsula, from the small township of Baxter through to the ever-evolving, eclectic township of Somerville, with its cafes, breweries, distilleries, restaurants and great shopping, to Tyabb with all of the amazing antique stores and the legendary Tyabb Airport, the birthplace of the air ambulance. Then to the township of Hastings, the third-largest town on the peninsula and one of incredible potential for small business, tourism, industrial opportunities, a green port and community engagement. It has the opportunity to be a real performing arts hub, with the decision by Mornington shire, championed by me as a councillor, to build a performing arts theatre there, something close to my heart. Further on you have the townships of Bittern, Crib Point, HMAS Cerberus, Balnarring, Somers and Merricks Beach, all thriving townships with communities that love where they live, supporting local business, sporting groups and markets. These are communities that care deeply about the environment and the effects of climate change, and they are passionate about supporting the wetlands, the green wedge and the native flora and fauna.

We all know how special this unique and forgotten side of the peninsula – or the ‘Ninch’ – is, the amazing potential it has. I am excited to say that finally – finally – after 16 years in opposition hands, being the forgotten side is over. This community has a seat in the Labor government, and I plan to capitalise on that to the fullest. That drives me to be here.

As much as there is to praise and celebrate about the electorate of Hastings, from my work as a councillor in the Mornington shire I know also that there are many problems and hurdles that we need to address. There is the rental shortage, there is a lack of affordable housing, there is growing homelessness and there are staff shortages. Now, I believe that some of these issues can be addressed by improving our public transport system. For instance, by putting sidings on the Stony Point line we could have a train service every half hour. By extending the hours of operation people could come into the area to work and get home again. People could travel to the city or to work or go to university or attend free TAFE. A cross bus service will allow people to cross the peninsula to get to jobs or access educational opportunities that they cannot access now.

With the rising cost of living, household budgets are stretched to breaking point. This leads to stress, anger, rising drug and alcohol abuse, increasing domestic violence, mental health issues, anxiety, depression and, tragically, the rise in suicides. I have lost too many friends to suicide. I lost my brother to suicide 23 years ago, and you would think the pain would get easier. That is why I am especially

proud to be part of a government that held the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System. They listened deeply to those people with lived experience and heard them and implemented every recommendation handed down. Yes, we can always do more, and yes, we will do more, but the Andrews government more than any other government in the nation has raised the bar to a higher level, and that is why I stand here today as part of the Labor government. I pledge that I will do all I can to help those in need, to support family groups and community groups, organisations and mental health providers in any and all ways I can.

There are many things I do not understand about society. As many people know, I started my career as a dancer. It was not easy, and like our Prime Minister I grew up in housing commission. There was Mum, four kids and virtually no support from Dad, and apart from financial hardship, there was the housing commission hardship. On way too many nights I would lie awake and listen to my alcoholic neighbour beat his wife and sometimes children, often watching TV and listening to it all unfold next door. Knowing what was coming, the mother would pass her kids over the fence to my mum, and we would all hide inside listening to the sounds of screams, pleading and a fist hitting flesh until finally silence would come. Several hours later, bloody and bruised, the mum would collect her kids – just another Saturday night, or maybe Wednesday, if the mood was right. Additionally, I had to contend with gangs in our housing commission area who were always on the lookout for that weird kid who did ballet. I did not go to the shops, which were a 10-minute walk away, for a whole year after they caught me there once.

Now, some would say it was the performing arts that saved me, but it was Labor. Only successive Labor governments have truly supported the performing arts. I would not have had the opportunities or the career I have had without the support of Labor. That drives me to be here.

As a dancer in the 1970s and 80s I worked within the queer community, although it was not quite called that or recognised as that until much later. My colleagues were men and women who were straight, gay, lesbian, non-binary, trans, queer – in short, people, friends, artists. I did not and do not understand the fear people have about others who are different. Diversity makes the world go around, and so I am proud to be part of a Labor government which embraces all people as equal and that is unconditionally inclusive of all people in our community.

In a ballet company men and women are equal. On stage there are only people working incredibly hard. Men lifted women; women lifted men. We work together as a team of equals, everyone giving everything to the performance, to the audience, to each other. It was only when I left this world and entered the business world that I saw this concept of women not being the equal of men, and it stunned me. That is why I am proud to be part of a Labor government that supports the unconditional equality of women. That drives me to be here.

I trust I have painted a picture of who I am, what I stand for and why I am here. There is much more that could be said, and I am happy to continue to tell my story. Stories are what nourish us. They feed the soul, the body and the mind. They do this whether you tell them through dance, acting or a dish you cook and serve to loved ones, friends or strangers. Stories give us inspiration and give us hope. Hope lives rent-free in my heart. I believe hope lives rent-free in all our hearts. This is why I stand here today.

Members applauded.

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (11:38): I would like to start by acknowledging the custodians and true sovereigns of this land, the Wurundjeri people. The electorate of Richmond was also built on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung land, and walking to my Fitzroy office on Gertrude Street each morning I am keenly aware of the deep significance of that location to Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Today it is one of the most upmarket, glitzy and trendy streets in the electorate, but before colonisation it was a living space for Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people, and more recently, after returning from the missions in the 1920s and returning from foster care and from institutions, it became an important spot for Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to reconnect, to organise. They established the first community-controlled organisations – the Aboriginal health centres and legal centres, the youth clubs and gymnasiums. It was and it still is an important social and political hub for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

This land's story of frontier clashes, of massacres and of dispossession is also a story of the strength and resilience of the Wurundjeri people, who have never ceded sovereignty, despite the devastating impacts of British invasion. They have fought to protect their culture and to protect their people in the face of genocide. But the harms of colonisation remain. We see them in the laws, the policies and the racism that cause intergenerational poverty, that cause overincarceration and that cause deaths in custody. We see them in the destruction of Aboriginal cultural heritage for mines or freeways. That is why I am proud to be in a party that continues to seek a shared understanding of this land's truth so that we can work together towards treaty and justice. While I am on Wurundjeri land, I pay respect to Wurundjeri elders and other First Nations elders past and present.

Before I move on, I would like to thank my predecessor. The Honourable Richard Wynne served the Richmond community for a very long time – he was elected last century – so I would like to thank him for 24 years of hard work and commitment to the people of Richmond and wish him a very happy retirement.

Daniel Andrews: He is not retired.

Gabrielle DE VIETRI: From Parliament. I am sure he will continue to do his very hard work outside of Parliament.

The Richmond electorate is smart. It is young and it is twice as queer as everywhere else, statistically speaking. We live close together: we are 66,000 people spread over just 13 square kilometres. We are bound by the waters of the Birrarung, from Clifton Hill and Abbotsford through Richmond, Cremorne and Burnley. We are progressive. We were among the first to declare a climate emergency and to recognise 26 January as a day of mourning and sadness. We are proud of our rich cultural, linguistic and religious diversity. People from Vietnam, from China, from Malaysia, from India, from Greece and Italy, from Somalia, from Eritrea and from Ethiopia all call Richmond home. We are home to a vibrant arts sector, the beating heart of Melbourne. Sport of course unites and divides us. Everyone knows it, but it is objectively true: we are home to the most livable neighbourhoods, the coolest street and the second-coolest street in the world. But we also have great disparity: 10 per cent of our population live in public housing and over half of our electorate rent their home. That is almost twice the state average.

I have lived in the electorate of Richmond for 20 years, and during that time I have worked mostly as an artist, making large-scale public artworks for museums and galleries across the world, drawing people into a conversation about how to create the world that we want to live in. In 2014 I was invited to exhibit in the Sydney biennale. If you are unfamiliar with the biennale, think of it as the grand final of the art world; it was a big deal. I worked on a new commission for almost two years. About one month before the show was due to open, I was shipping the artwork on an 8-tonne truck on a ferry over to Cockatoo Island when I found out that the major sponsor of the biennale, Transfield, was negotiating a multibillion-dollar contract with the Australian government to operate the detention centres on Manus Island and Nauru. I stood at a fork in the road: do I fulfil a lifelong career ambition or do I follow my moral compass? What does that even look like? How was I supposed to respond to this? Would anything I do actually make a difference? I came together with my fellow artists. We met with representatives from the biennale and from Transfield. We spoke with refugees and advocates. After deliberations and discussions, trying to get other people to make a better decision, to make the right decision, I realised that nothing could justify my participation in a chain of associations that led directly to the incarceration and torture of innocent people seeking safety in this country, so I withdrew my work.

George Brandis, the Attorney-General, threatened to pull public funding from any other artist who refused private sponsorship on ethical grounds. Malcolm Turnbull denounced my 'vicious ingratitude', and that is when we knew it was working. Over the next week nine artists withdrew their work until the chair of the biennale and director of Transfield resigned. But he did not just resign, he took his 11 per cent share in the company with him. Under public pressure superannuation funds divested, share prices plummeted. The Transfield name was trashed, so they changed their name and they sold the company to a Spanish conglomerate, which shortly afterwards announced that they would no longer be servicing Australia's immigration detention industry. This was a turning point for me. It made me realise that change is possible and that together we are powerful.

After that I linked arms with my neighbours to stop the east-west toll road that would rip through our community. We barricaded border force in solidarity with the men imprisoned on Manus Island. We organised petitions and boycotts, protests and rallies. We shrouded Picasso's *Weeping Woman*, ending the relationship between the National Gallery of Victoria and Wilson Security. We dyed water fountains red, we stopped trucks, we crashed parties, we wrote in the sky, we occupied intersections. We disrupted and disobeyed. We negotiated change and we held governments and companies to account. In my final exhibition in 2019 we mapped the thousands of connections between the fossil fuels industry and the arts, sparking a nationwide divestment movement. So it would come as no surprise to this chamber that I made a deliberate decision to leave the arts. I took up a juris doctor and started working as a paralegal to support refugees and asylum seekers to navigate this cruel, bipartisan immigration system. But what good is it, I wondered, helping people navigate a system that is designed to dehumanise, demoralise and eventually destroy a person?

Becoming a politician was never part of the plan for me, but I saw a problem. I was always calling from the sidelines, trying to get someone else in a position of power to make the right decision, when I could clearly see that the politicians we were trying to influence had already been bought. They had been bought by their corporate interests, they had been bought by their wealthy donors, and this democracy is rigged in their favour. But I realised something. I realised that these seats are not reserved for them; these seats are for all of us. And so in 2020 I put my hand up for local government and was elected mayor of the first ever Greens-majority government in the world – a majority young, majority women, culturally diverse council of which I am so proud, because it leads change in so many ways.

We showed Victoria what real climate action looks like, transitioning our community centres off gas and installing the first-ever inner-urban community battery. We got serious about LGBTIQ+ equality with our first strategy, and we reformed our discriminatory public drinking laws. We supported the arts, our local businesses and public housing residents during the pandemic like never before. But the problems our community faces cannot be solved at a local government level alone. The systemic changes we need are being held back by state and federal parties more concerned about holding on to electoral power than about creating a truly equal climate-safe future.

Every day that future is slipping through our hands, because every day for the people of Richmond life is getting harder. More and more people are experiencing housing stress and homelessness for the very first time. They are slipping onto the public housing waiting list, which is 120,000 people strong, and growing. I have seen how this state government is abandoning our public housing residents, with the lowest funding of public housing anywhere in the country.

We hear from people who bear the brunt of that every day, and they are desperate for help. I am talking about Rosalie – a single mother forced to lift her disabled 10-year-old son up steps every day to get in and out of the house, trapped in a holding cell of transitional housing for 10 years. I am talking about Aunty Tracey, who is living in an apartment block where tenants were forced to live for years with raw sewage spilling out onto their doorstep, spilling up through their shower drains – for years. You literally had to step over it to get to the children's swings. I am talking about Aisha – a child struggling to breathe night after night as the black mould on her bedroom ceiling spreads. These stories are so common that they have been normalised and internalised. Make no mistake, none of this is their fault. This is a deliberate failure of successive governments who see housing as an investment opportunity

for property developers rather than a human right, and because of this we are walking, eyes wide open, into a deepening housing crisis.

As the calls for maintenance and the desperate need for public housing grow, this government is giving away public housing land to private developers. They are giving away public housing land to private developers. Playgrounds, community gardens, basketball courts: they are giving that land to private property developers – the one place that public housing residents forced to live without air conditioning and without balconies can go during heatwaves that are getting longer and hotter. Meanwhile, 800 metres down the road at the Fitzroy gasworks site, they are selling off 3 hectares of public remediated land – remediated with taxpayers funding – to private developers, when they could be building public housing as they promised in 2018. They are neglecting the people of Richmond, and that is why I am here.

Decades of government delay, of underfunding and of the hollowing out of our public institutions has affected not just the people of Richmond but the whole of Victoria. They are building housing, but it is affordable only by name, because no-one can afford it. They are building schools, but our teachers are run into the ground. They are building hospitals, but our nurses and ambos have hit a wall. They are building a blockbuster gallery, with some lovely spaces for their corporate donors, but our artists cannot keep their heads above water. They are striving for gender equality, but on the ground they harass, intimidate and bully young women politicians. They are promising renewables, but at the same time they are drilling for gas. They are drilling for gas in a climate crisis. They say we cannot afford more public housing and they cannot afford to lift the public sector wage cap; meanwhile, they funnel money into logging, into prisons, into horseracing and into the fossil fuels industry.

The people of my electorate have told me they are struggling. They are struggling, and they are terrified because we are so unprepared for what is coming. We know that there is no social justice without ecological justice. Floods, fires, heatwaves, droughts, food insecurity, displacement of people and infrastructure under strain – we all know that we are not doing enough. It is coming sooner than we thought and it is worse than expected, and yet this government is drilling for gas in our oceans. They are extending the life of our coal-fired stations. They are still logging our native forests – pouring fuel on the fire.

We are terrified, but I am hopeful, because I have seen that the urgent change that we need is possible, and we know that together we are powerful. I am hopeful because half a million Victorians voted for positive change in the last election. The Greens team in this Parliament has doubled from four to eight. Inside and outside of Parliament we are part of a powerful movement of change that is growing to meet the scale of the problems we face. As your representative in this Parliament, I will fight for First Nations justice, for climate justice, for housing equality, to cap rents and give renters real rights and to build and maintain public housing. I will fight against bigotry and discrimination in all its forms. I will fight for the rights of people with disabilities and for a living wage for artists. I will fight for the organisations that connect us, care for us and educate us.

Thank you to those who voted for change and to those of you who have already been part of transformative change in Richmond. To my incredible campaign team, volunteers and supporters; my fellow artists and co-conspirators; my Greens colleagues; my dear family and friends; and everyone with whom I have stood on the picket line: your strength sparks change, and every day I will amplify your calls inside this Parliament.

I would like to finish by inviting the people of Richmond to join me in demanding a better future for all of us. I am very humbly your vehicle for change, your voice inside these chambers. I am at your service.

Members applauded.

Natalie HUTCHINS (Sydenham – Minister for Education, Minister for Women) (11:58): Thank you, Speaker, and can I congratulate you on being appointed Speaker. It is fantastic to have you back in the chair.

I am really pleased to be able to rise to reply to the Governor's address of the 60th Parliament, and I am so pleased to be returned as the member for Sydenham for my fourth term, although I have got to say it was a very, very tough election, with some extreme leftists and extreme rightists on both sides of us, particularly during pre-poll and on election day.

I want to thank the team that wrapped around me and supported me during that tough campaign – the toughest of four campaigns, I would say – and our volunteers, our Labor Party members, who had to put up with abuse, threats and insults, and sunburn, wind, rain and sleet during the two weeks but also beautiful compliments and stories of resilience and community support that came out and that we heard in the two weeks that we spent on pre-poll, face-to-face with so many voters, and on election day. Can I thank my beautiful son Xavier Hutchins for being by my side every single day of pre-poll and all day election day; my mum and stepdad Di and Mark; my partner Sudarsan; my Labor team in Sydenham – Deepti Alurkar, Ian Herbert, Slave Acevski, Sime Acevski, Sylvia De Bree, Cesar Melhem, Khalil El Samad, Camden, Yogi, Sisay Dinku, James Singh, Tina Heywood, Phil Clinkaberry, Richard Carthew, Neil Hunichen, Ali Kazima, Ujjala Camilleri, Hassan Gul, Praveen Kumar, Raj Saini, Lucky Karu, Dawn Clark, Thomas Nash, Kat Theodosis, Lachlan Newman, Laura Adams and Ranka; and of course my immediate team, which wrapped around me – Robert, Ismene, Maddie, Katharine, Gabby, Rita, Rachael, Lawrence, Jen, Dylan, Bree, Natalie Durkin, Nicole, Anne-Maree and Andrea. A very special shout-out to Rebekah Hogan, who worked endlessly in the lead-up to the campaign, and also to my campaign manager and team leader Uros Rasic – always there to support me, and thanks are not enough for what he did throughout the campaign. So thank you to them all.

Since coming to government we have worked hard to build and upgrade our schools in every corner of the state, and we have invested \$12.8 billion – \$12.8 billion – to improve classrooms, upgrade facilities and build new schools. We will continue to make sure every student can access a great local school through the opening just this week of 12 new schools, another one coming next term and 14 new schools in the planning next year to open, and then we have started work on purchasing land and planning yet another 25 schools beyond that to make up our commitment of 100 new schools. We will keep delivering upgrades by investing \$850 million, a commitment we took to the election, to fund works at 89 primary and secondary schools across the state and opening six new cutting-edge tech schools, bringing tech school coverage to two-thirds of Victorian secondary schools. More than 25 per cent of this total spend has been committed in regional Victoria, making sure families have access to great local schools no matter where they live.

In Melbourne's western suburbs alone there are four classrooms worth of children being born every week, and that is why we opened four new schools in the Wyndham area just this week. We are placing students' wellbeing at the centre of education, including through continuing the rollout of disability inclusion reform, mental health in primary schools and the Schools Mental Health Fund and continuing our fantastic tutor learning initiative. I cannot speak highly enough of this program. We are engaging almost 6000 additional staff across our schools to deliver this fantastic initiative and to keep kids engaged in school and able to catch up where they need to get that support. We are also expanding and delivering the Navigator program to tackle those kids who are finding it hard to engage in school. This government has invested more than \$600 million into mental health in schools alone, with a mental health practitioner already in every single government school and specialist school across the state. This was a really key element and recommendation of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System. This is being done a year ahead of schedule, with the mental health and wellbeing leaders being rolled out in all primary schools to support kids as well.

This is all about prevention, and we want to make sure that we are equipping our kids to be the most resilient they can be. If they cannot be happy and engaged in school, they cannot succeed, so that is a real focus for us. Schools are able to access support from the Schools Mental Health Fund to select the

programs that best meet the needs of local communities, and I have seen some of these in place. They go from everything from the provision of therapy dogs in schools to therapy art and to the Smiling Mind program, and they are just fantastic programs that teach kids how to deal with their emotions and also how to build resilience. If we are doing that with our youngest kids, we know that that is going to produce better mental health outcomes as they become teenagers facing challenges and also into their adult lives. So these are absolute game changers, these programs.

Another proud reform is the transformation of the way in which our kids with disabilities are supported in our schools. The 2020–21 budget provided \$1.6 billion to change the experience of schooling for students with disabilities. We continue to roll out the progress we are making in implementing these reforms across our schools in the state, with new schools undertaking that program this year. This funding provides a more effective, strength-based and personalised support plan for every student in receipt of funding through the implementation of individual student support inclusion profiles that are now rolling out in schools, and the ambition for this reform is to transform both the way in which students with a disability are included in our schools and the way in which they are supported.

But a school's buildings and programs are only as good as the teachers and support staff that we have got in our schools delivering them. For our students to be the best that they can, our hardworking teachers need to be given the resources and the time to do their jobs. Supporting our teachers and school staff is one of the biggest priorities I have as Minister for Education. We have listened to teachers and we have heard about the need for more lesson planning time, and through a commitment made through the last enterprise bargaining agreement over \$779 million has been provided over the next four years to reduce face-to-face teaching hours for our teachers and to recruit an additional 1900 teachers. We are delivering this initiative as an hour out of the classroom this year and then an additional half an hour, taking it to an hour and a half, next year, giving teachers more time to plan, to mark and to do all things that they do in preparation for classes.

We are delivering the innovative initial teacher education program, which is providing 1200 fast-tracked student teachers straight into our classrooms, and an extra 250 graduates will be supported with a one-year program of induction and mentoring support. It is called the Career Start pilot. It is a fantastic program, and I have heard really good things from principals about this. That is a nation-leading program that this government has invested \$73 million in. This builds on the support that is currently being provided to the 700 graduates that are currently participating in the program.

We are also delivering \$24 million to support Victoria's vocational and applied learning workforce, enabling skilled vocational specialists to be VET trainers in our schools and to pass their skills and enthusiasm on to kids who choose a vocational pathway, attracting and retaining a high-quality teacher workforce. We announced an extra \$19 million in the lead-up to the last election to attract and retain teachers, on top of the \$1.3 billion worth of existing initiatives. We know there are challenges in recruiting and retaining teachers, as there have been across a number of workforces in Australia and here in Victoria. That is why we are investing in these initiatives to make sure that we complement the federal government's work in a new teacher workforce action plan, and we will continue to roll these out.

We are also committed to working with our teachers to make sure kids get the best education and start to life, and an example of this is rolling out our senior secondary pathways reform across this year and the introduction of the new vocational major. This is a generational change to VCE, and I am sure it will provide so much better choice and more pathways to students. It is an absolute game changer, led by the previous Minister for Education, James Merlino, the former member for Monbulk, and I want to pay tribute to James for having such a leading hand in all of the initiatives that I have just outlined and in particular the fantastic work that he did in rolling out the inclusion program across our schools. I also want to pay tribute and give my thanks to the personal touch the Premier has had in working with families with kids with disabilities. He announced as a key part of our election platform a \$207 million package to transform our specialist schools and with it the lives of their students, carers and families.

In my first week back in the electorate I heard from a number of families who heard loud and clear these commitments and were knocking on my door, day one, asking me when some of these initiatives started. Of course that is the extension to the outside school hours care, making sure that we have that specialist service available after hours for kids with special needs at our specialist schools so that parents have the opportunity to continue to work and further their careers. There will also be NDIS coordination roles in all specialist schools, a thousand scholarships to attract speech pathologists, occupational therapists and disability workers into regional areas where they are really needed and of course an \$8.2 million commitment as part of this for TAFEs to employ 16 transition officers to work with secondary school students with disabilities to make sure those students have a pathway post secondary school.

Every student has a home in the state system, and we will build our schools so they provide the supports that these kids need so that inclusion in our schools is a central part of what we deliver. In contrast, those opposite came to the last election with policies that looked to cut \$1 billion from our education system, including the previous commitments they made to slashing the education maintenance allowance and cutting funding for speech pathologists. Of course this is all on top of the closure of so many schools – 350 in fact – in the Kennett era. We are continuing to rebuild. This is partly why we made the commitment on the 100 new schools. We have worked to turn around those closures and continue to make Victoria's schools system absolutely thrive. That is why Victoria is the Education State.

Today we can be proud that women make up 48 per cent of parliamentarians across both houses of the government, and it makes me smile to say that; 54 per cent of Labor's caucus are women; and 64 per cent of ministers are women in our government. It has been a long road to get here aided by our affirmative action policies and quotas that have been hard won and hard fought for for many years within the Labor Party. We can all be quite proud of the fact that the Andrews Labor government leads the nation in gender equality in terms of both its policies but also our composition. In contrast, those opposite only have 27 per cent women in their shadow cabinet, and they do not believe in affirmative action. I would take a leaf out of our book if I were them and make that significant change to put women at the forefront.

The Andrews government is committed to the inclusion of more diverse women in Parliament, on government boards and in local council, and we can and will do more to support this. We know that gender equality and diversity strengthen our democracy and better the lives of all Victorians, and I am so proud to continue in the role as Minister for Women to develop a new gender equality strategy and action plan, which will place Victorian women and girls at the forefront of the reform and change that is needed to achieve equality in this state.

I am also excited to continue our work to address the fundamental causes of economic inequality, including through implementing the recommendations of the inquiry into economic equity for Victorian women and increasing women's representation in traditionally male-dominated industries by implementing industry strategies in manufacturing and in the energy sector later this year. The Andrews Labor government is committed to improving the health and wellbeing of all Victorian women, and as Minister for Women I look forward to supporting the fantastic work that has been done by the Minister for Health in improving the health issues faced by women, particularly those who have restrictions on them due to their financial situations. I look forward to being able to roll out a public commitment around free sanitary products in 700 public locations.

Members applauded.

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (12:13): I rise to make my contribution on the address-in-reply. I listened to the Governor's speech very intently to hear what was in there for regional Victoria. As some people may not be aware, the government works with the Governor. The government puts its agenda forward to the Governor so she can include that in her speech. I listened intently to hear what was in there for regional Victoria and whether there were some serious commitments to the things that

regional Victoria needs the Andrews government to do over the next years. I must admit I was extremely disappointed on behalf of regional Victoria that there was very little in the Governor's speech about regional Victoria. 'Regional Victoria' – the words were only mentioned twice through the speech, once in relation to V/Line fares –

Ben Carroll interjected.

Peter WALSH: I will come back to the minister in a minute – and once in relation to the Commonwealth Games. When you come to V/Line fares, the government's proposal that the Governor read out did not go anywhere near what the Nationals and Liberals committed to do if they had actually been elected. So the minister might give cheek across the table, but we committed not only to having \$2 fares in Melbourne but to halving V/Line fares in regional Victoria. So it was not just a guarantee – and we know how much value a lot of people place on guarantees from the Andrews government – we actually committed to halving the fares. More importantly, for the minister at the table's benefit, the Minister for Public Transport, who is sitting back smiling, regional Victorians get sick of replacement buses every time a train does not run. People actually like their trains. They would prefer a train over a bus, and the minister is nodding about that. We all know that people like their trains, so we also committed that if there was a replacement bus for a train that was not running, that bus fare would be free as well because people were not getting the service they signed up to. What the government had in the Governor's speech around V/Line was nowhere near as much as the Nationals and Liberal Party committed to coming up to the election.

The thing that I really wanted to see in the Governor's speech was some commitment from the government to equity in infrastructure spend for metropolitan Melbourne versus the regions. As those who have spoken before have said, we had the independent Parliamentary Budget Office go through the two previous budgets for what capital spend there was in regional Victoria versus the city, bearing in mind that 25 per cent of the population of Victoria live in regional Victoria. If you go through the independent Parliamentary Budget Office report, in those two budgets respectively, 11 per cent and 13 per cent of the capital spend was in regional Victoria on capital projects, compared to what was spent in Melbourne. There is a major inequity there compared to the population that is in regional Victoria. Bear in mind that capital spend in Melbourne also included the \$28 billion in cost overruns on those major projects in Melbourne – \$28 billion. If you took the cost overruns on capital projects in Melbourne, they would effectively fix nearly every country road that needs fixing. \$28 billion into the country roads would make a huge difference to those particular roads. I wanted to see some equity in capital spend, metropolitan versus region, in the Governor's speech and a commitment from the government, and I did not see that.

We all know the pressure our households, our families in regional Victoria and metropolitan Melbourne, are facing with cost-of-living pressures: the cost of energy bills, the cost of water bills and the cost of school bills with families with kids going back to school. We know Victoria is the most expensive place in Australia to educate your children through the government school system – most likely for the worst outcome from an educational point of view as well. But, most importantly, I also notice that since the election the government has actually raided the metropolitan water authorities for a major contribution. They have not called it a 'dividend', they have called it a 'capital repatriation'. When I went to school, that was effectively the government putting their hand in the coffers of the water authorities and taking money out. That money would have been better used in reducing household bills rather than going to the government. It is only because of the poor financial management of this state – that \$28 billion cost overrun that I am talking about – that they have to go and raid the government instrumentalities, as they have with the TAC and as they have with the Victorian WorkCover Authority as well. When you talk about the cost of living, the government is making cost-of-living pressures worse for Victorian households by raiding the government instrumentalities instead of lowering their bills.

The government has made some commitments about the health system, but I think, disappointingly, it is about money in, not outcomes out. One of the commitments the Nationals and Liberal Party took

to the election was to halve the elective surgery waiting list. That is a very clear KPI that can be measured over time. The government says they will put extra dollars in. They never talk about what outcomes those dollars are going to drive, and we have seen how elective surgery waiting lists have blown out over the last few years. We all have examples coming into our offices of people that cannot get elective surgery, cannot get an ambulance and cannot get a 000 call answered. They are the sorts of outcomes or KPIs you should have – that those things are improving – rather than just saying ‘We’re having record spending’. By definition, as the population of Victoria grows and as the size of Victorian budget grows corresponding to that, every year there will be record spending, but that does not necessarily deliver better outcomes for Victorians. We would like to have seen some clear commitment and an actual number around how the government is going to drive down the elective surgery waiting list and how they are going to solve the issue in regional Victoria of getting a mental health appointment.

Yesterday in question time the shadow minister raised an issue about the tragic increase in the suicide rate in Victoria. One of the issues is, for those people who are struggling, you have got to wait three or six months to get an appointment. If you have got a family member or if you are the person that is actually suffering a mental health issue, you cannot park that for three months or six months, waiting for an appointment; you need support now. There is nothing in the Governor’s speech other than that they are going to tip more money in. There is nothing in there that actually says there is going to be a better outcome for Victorians that have a mental health crisis in their life, in their family. They need the support when it happens, not to go on a waiting list for an appointment into the future.

So there is a lot of work that needs to be done to fix the healthcare crisis in Victoria at every front. Whenever we raise this the government talks about how, somehow, we are criticising the health professionals in Victoria. I think everyone in this house has absolute respect for people that work in the health system. They work above and beyond, and they are going further – above and beyond again – because there is not enough staff. There are not enough health professionals. I find that in my own communities they are coming to me saying, ‘We are just worn out. We are working extra shifts.’ Some of the doctors are working literally two or three weeks without a day off, because that is what is needed to fill the rosters. So we need a commitment to actual numbers of health professionals that will be employed so the government can be held to account. It is part of the role of this Parliament to hold the executive government to account. We have lost the way the system works here in Victoria. The executive government think they are separate to the Parliament. They are actually answerable to the Parliament, and there should be proper reporting to the Parliament, to the public of Victoria, about what the government investment is achieving with the things that they invest in here in Victoria.

I mentioned before the issue of roads and what that \$28 billion in cost overruns on major projects in Melbourne would achieve with roads. We have a serious issue with the condition of our roads. The floods have made some areas worse – yes, that is true – but there is a systemic issue of underfunding and underperformance by our road authorities that actually build the roads. The classic example is the Western Highway west of Ballarat. I think it has been pulled up about three or four times now. Every time it gets repaired, within 12 to 18 months it has to be repaired again. We need value for taxpayers dollars in how we build roads here in Victoria, and we need increased funding to make sure that can actually continue into the future. Whether it be the road authorities, whether it be local government, they need an increase in funding. They need a sustained increase in funding year after year after year so they can gear up – they can have the contractors, they can have the machinery. One-off blitzes do not solve the issue; it is sustained, long-term funding.

One of the tragedies of the Andrews government is with one of the programs they scrapped on being elected after 2014. It was what was called the country roads and bridges program. At that time there was \$1 million a year for every regional council, year after year, so they could build it into their road maintenance program and their road-building program. They could engage the contractors, they could make sure they had the rock and all the material they needed. They knew year after year that money was there. It was probably the most popular program in local government that I can remember in my

time in Parliament here. There were people that said, 'We voted for you guys in 2010 because you had a program that would actually help us solve the infrastructure gap when it came to our road maintenance.' I think as country MPs we have all had campaigns on the roads in our electorates. I have got a number of roads that I go down every month or two to see if they have been repaired. Sometimes they have been repaired, but by the time I come back there are crosses and white paint put on them again because they need repairing again because they are not being repaired properly. They are not being dug up with new foundations put down; they are just having a bit more tar put over the top – and it goes out again very, very quickly.

The road I really want to mention is the Prairie-Rochester Road east of Prairie. That road now is more potholes than it is road. It is a C-class road, it is A-double rated, it is a school bus route – and it has potholes bigger than this table that sits in front of us. They are almost continuous now because it is so bad. The people that live along that road – Bendigo is their main shopping centre, about 50 kilometres away – are constantly having to go to Bendigo to get new windscreens because of the rocks that are thrown up from the trucks that drive along that particular road.

There was nothing in the Governor's speech on behalf of the government that actually set out clearly how we are going to have a long-term, sustained increase in funding for roads in Victoria. There is a very good saying that if you fix country roads, you save country lives. Tragically, we had a motorcyclist lose her life on a road north of Shepparton just before Christmas. As I understand it, her husband was in a car following her. She hit a pothole, flipped the bike and tragically died because of that major pothole there. They are the sorts of tragedies we will have across regional Victoria if the roads are not fixed into the future.

The last thing I would have liked to have seen in the Governor's speech was something to resolve the crisis around child care in regional Victoria. It has a number of effects. The biggest effect it has is actually on the workforce. In a lot of country towns particularly the schools, the hospitals and the health services need child care so that they can get staff. Cohuna is one of the towns in my electorate, and there they are desperate for child care. At the moment they do round trips of 100 kilometres and 50 kilometres to get to child care so they can go to work. Both the director of nursing at the hospital and the principal at the school would love to have child care in that town so they could get staff. There are couples who are having to make the really, really difficult financial choice as to which partner can work full-time so that someone can look after their children. There needs to be a different model for child care in regional Victoria, in our smaller country towns, so that there is the viability there for someone to run a childcare service. A combination of both state and federal governments is needed to fix the childcare crisis in regional Victoria – particularly capital from the state and some changes to the rule about how the funding model works – so we can actually make sure that there is child care in those facilities. Without child care we are not going to have the workforce we need to deliver the health outcomes that everyone aspires to or deliver the educational outcomes everyone aspires to, because there are just not enough staff to do those particular things.

I am disappointed the government has not got any focus on regional Victoria at all. When the Premier was first elected in 2014 there were probably two commitments that I can remember that stood out. The first was that he was not going to increase taxes or introduce new taxes, and we know that was an absolute fail over there – a great big red cross. The other thing the Premier gave a commitment to was government for all Victorians. I think, if you look at the Governor's speech and if you look at the next four years' commitments from this government, the Andrews government, there is not a clear commitment to governing for all Victorians. It is very much about metropolitan Melbourne, about big projects, about deals between big building companies and the unions on those projects and not about actually delivering for people across regional Victoria on all those indicators that I have spoken about.

Members applauded.

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (12:28): Deputy Speaker, I think it is the first time I have been on my feet in the 60th Parliament with you in the chair, and I want to congratulate you on your elevation to

that position. I am sure that we will see glimpses of your irrepressible sense of humour in this role – perhaps not to the same extent as I might have enjoyed it in the 59th Parliament, but it shall be there, I am quite sure, nonetheless.

Can I begin by acknowledging the inaugural speeches, particularly from the member for Yan Yean earlier this morning, and to my great friend the member for Hastings I say welcome to this place. What a stunning speech. It was an absolute joy to have the member for Hastings's son-in-law, daughter and granddaughter in the gallery, who are respectively my brother, my sister-in-law and my niece. I will let all of you join the dots in relation to that, but it was a great joy to have them here today. I thank you for your magnificent speech, and I am sure you will make a stunning contribution over the life of this Parliament.

It is an honour to be back representing the wonderful people of Victoria's eastern suburbs, the Labor heartland of the east. Last year my campaign was unequivocally very, very successful in returning a Labor member to Ringwood, and it was part of an overall fantastic result for the Andrews Labor government. Ringwood secured the second-largest two-party preferred swing to Labor of any seat in the state, and we saw an extraordinary 10-plus percentage point collapse in the Liberal primary vote in our part of the world too. I think it was a stunning endorsement of all of the magnificent work of this government.

I am very proud of my campaign's achievements, and I am prouder still of all the people who helped turn this dream result, our mission, into a reality. I would like to thank some of those supporters, who turned out to get the job done, rain, hail or shine, and in a La Niña year there was more of the former than there was of the latter, that is for sure. Let me start first by extending my gratitude to Tom Yakubowski, my campaign manager. Tom would rise before dawn and inhale litres of coffee so he could devote every waking moment to coordinating supporters, advertisements, printing and me, and Tom's strategic nous and maturity belie his age. He brought a novel energy and political instinct to the Ringwood campaign, and I know he will continue to do that wherever his political career takes him. I am very grateful to have had him lead my election team.

My campaign was also powered by Victorian Labor's highest achieving field organiser Drew Lazzari Lindsay. I have known Drew for quite a time. He has always been a campaigning machine. I think I have said on many occasions that he gives better phone than just about anyone I have met. He was a force of nature back in 2018, and he leapt at the chance to lead this grassroots campaign last year. He worked around the clock to build a small army of progressive volunteers, and his ground team of real locals knocked on the doors and called the phones of over two-thirds of the electorate, securing some of the best DVC, direct voter contact, rates right across the party and indeed right across the state. So I thank him. He is an absolute asset and, too, has a very bright career ahead of him.

To Lucy Gunner, my former electorate officer when I was the member for Burwood, one of the greatest political professionals I know, I want her to know that she has my absolute thanks. Thank you, Lucy, for taking the weeks of leave to work in the engine room of the campaign, filling booth rosters and running early polling like an absolute legend. I wish her all the very best for her journey. Her best days are yet to come, and I think there are plenty of exciting times ahead for her as we continue the fine work of this Andrews Labor government.

To Lynne and John Penrose, they did just an amazing job coordinating literally tens of thousands of pieces of literature in the letterboxes, spreading our message, our positive plans for the Ringwood electorate, right across the electorate. Lynne, happily, is also a pretty sharp chef and managed to keep our campaign volunteers very well fed over the course of the campaign. I am grateful also to Steven Marks and his crew down at MVC Boxing. Steve unilaterally determined for all of his boxing protégés that their cardio routine would consist exclusively of letterboxing throughout the course of the campaign, so they quite literally ran out hundreds and thousands of pieces of literature over the course of the campaign.

This campaign demonstrated, I think, perhaps more than previous campaigns I have been involved in, that elections are won by real people having real conversations and finding out what matters on the ground – taking, of course, the opportunity to share the Andrews Labor government’s agenda and achievements but also taking the opportunity to connect with voters and understand what is most important to them. I want to thank Mathew O’Connor, Alison Fithall, Cynthia Hancke, David Barker, Denise Longley, Janine Ryan, Leroy Szabo, Liam Dwyer, Max Yakubowski and Sumudu Dharmapala. They were extraordinary leaders in this task, they were instrumental to our collective success, and they have my deep and enduring gratitude.

A good ground game means having conversations with all members of the community. In Ringwood that absolutely included the more than 20 per cent of the community that has Chinese heritage, and I would like to give a massive shout-out to Charlotte Wang, who showed up week after week to lead our Chinese language phone banks. We called thousands of Chinese Victorians right across the electorate over the course of the campaign, and that simply could not have happened without also the support and dedication of Eric Li and Floris Xue, who worked very closely with Charlotte in making our Chinese language campaign the very best in the state. So to all of them I say ‘xièxiè’ and ‘xīnnián kuàilè’. It has been an enormous effort, and I am very, very grateful for everything that you did, not just for the benefit of the campaign but for the benefit of the Chinese language speakers in our electorate, who I think in many cases for the first time began to feel connected to what is happening inside the Andrews Labor government.

I must give a special thanks to some of the next generation of political greats emerging from the Monash University Labor club, my spiritual home, coordinated by Noah Andrews and his comrade Felix Hughes. When the campaign heated up in Ringwood, and heat up it did, Noah and Felix did not need to be asked twice to bring down an absolute typhoon of progressive activists. In addition to those two, there were Aaron Sharkey, Liz De La Motte, Joseph Cercone, Izzy Carmody, Alanah Alsop, Samantha Hudson, Kitty McLoughlin, Olla al Saabary, Kristy Dodson-Geary, Phillip Danh, Chloe Ward, Sofia Felton, Harry Ketsakidis, Josh Spork, Matilda Day, Krish Rajavel, Bethany Shields and Maya McGrath. I say to all of my Monash Labor friends and comrades, thank you for being there for Ringwood. Thank you for the efforts you put in on behalf of this government and our movement.

I also want to thank the budding union activists who toiled alongside Trades Hall to keep Ringwood red, and I especially want to give shout-outs to Phoebe Cotton, Declan and Connor Dubout, Ethan Grindlay, Patrick Bunney, Thomas Nash and Allegra Pilati for doing their part to keep the needs and the aspirations of workers in Ringwood right at the very heart of our campaign. Of course that does not happen without the support of our mighty trade union movement, and in particular the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, the United Workers Union and the Electrical Trades Union. Activists and unions from right across the broader labour movement were instrumental in our campaign. I want to thank also EMILY’s List, who came out on some particularly difficult days, when some of the behaviour was particularly odious, and did a magnificent job in keeping us focused on promoting our positive plan for Ringwood and not getting dragged into some of the shenanigans that were being put about by some of my opponents.

I want to thank Dustin Halse, who did a magnificent job in his time as the member for Ringwood. They are enormous boots to fill, but Dustin has a fine legacy and has set up a whole bunch of things that I will have the great pleasure of perhaps opening over the course of this term that simply would not have happened without him. So to him and Rachel and Teddy, I say thank you for everything you have done for our community, and I wish you all the very best in whatever adventures lie ahead.

I would like to acknowledge the support of some of my colleagues over the course of the past year. In particular a big thanks to the Premier and the Deputy Premier, Minister Williams, Minister D’Ambrosio, Minister Stitt, Minister Shing and the minister at the table, Minister Carroll, as well as President Leane, for the visits to the electorate, for the guidance, for their passion and for their firm, firm support for the campaign we were running and everything we were trying to achieve in our part

of the world. I also want to acknowledge the chair of the campaign, James Merlino, the former member for Monbulk, who did a stunning job in that role, and the ALP leadership team of Chris Ford, Nicola Castleman, Cam Petrie and our campaign headquarters advisers Micky Rootes and later in the campaign Ash Bright. You are all second to none, the finest political professionals in the nation, and you have my gratitude.

To my eastern comrades, including you, Deputy Speaker – jeez, there are a lot; just hang on, I have got to count them all – the members for Monbulk, Box Hill, Glen Waverley, Ashwood and Bayswater. There are so many members in the eastern suburbs now it is hard to keep track of all of them, but to all of my great friends and comrades in the east, thank you for your support. We worked collectively on a range of matters over the course of the campaign, and I think the voters in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne have made very clear now what they believe to be the best government for them: one that is meeting their needs and working hard for those communities.

Finally, to my family I say a deep thankyou – to my wife Jess and my children Olly, Hugo, Angus and Frankie. Thank you for having my back, for supporting me through what was a roller-coaster 2022 with some enormous challenges, and for being there for me always. To my extended family, and particularly to David, Court, Jake and the kids, your support has meant everything. I also want to thank Mum and Dad, who happen to be here in the gallery today, for always backing me through the highs and the lows and for encouraging me to be a better son, a better husband and ultimately a better representative for my community – to you, my thanks.

While the victory was sweet, the real work is what matters. That is the privilege we seek when we seek government in Victoria. I am stoked to be part of this government for another four years, because we are a government that gets on and delivers, and deliver we will for the electorate of Ringwood. In every corner of the electorate, from Blackburn to Heathmont, from Ringwood East to Vermont North, the work of this government is clear for all to see. We have already removed two dangerous level crossings at Blackburn Road and Heatherdale Road and rebuilt Heatherdale station as part of that level crossing removal program. That removal program is genuinely one of the most successful infrastructure projects undertaken by any government in our nation's history. It creates great local jobs, it busts congestion and it paves the way for more reliable and frequent train services. It makes our roads and our footpaths safer. The good people of Ringwood want more level crossings gone, and that is exactly why my community backed the Andrews Labor government, because only the Andrews Labor government will make the Ringwood electorate level crossing free by 2025. This week indeed work is well underway at the last two of the crossings to go at Dublin Road, Ringwood East, and Bedford Road in Ringwood, because the Andrews government is delivering what it promised and continues to do what matters. Even my opponent in the end, having opposed the level crossing removals for the duration of the campaign, turned around in the last weeks and said that only the Liberals would deliver that project. Well, happily they will not get the opportunity, and in any event it was fundamentally wrong.

We want better road connections as well, and the North East Link is a big chunk of that. It is going to deliver Melbourne's first busway, huge upgrades to the Eastern Freeway and 34 kilometres of brand new walking and cycling paths. It is a terrific project, and the people of Ringwood want it done.

On education, we are investing in multimillion-dollar upgrades for every government high school. Shovels are in the ground everywhere, and over the next four years we will also be backing Heathmont East Primary with a \$5.4 million upgrade to deliver world-class facilities for them, in addition to a \$17.6 million major upgrade of Mullauna College. Education in Mitcham has never looked better. We believe in education, and that is why my electorate backed our plan for free three- and four-year-old kinder. It is no longer just a promise, it is a plan, it is policy.

All of these projects, including importantly – and time is against me now – the huge commitment to rebuild Maroondah Hospital from the ground up for \$1.05 billion, have been resoundingly endorsed by my electorate. They have at the same time rejected the Trumpist populism and reactionary right, so

many of whom behaved so appallingly throughout the course of the campaign, and I will have more to say about all of those matters in my submission to the Electoral Matters Committee in the fullness of time. I want to briefly acknowledge Cynthia Watson, my opponent, who was both calm and dignified in circumstances where many around her were not. I want to say to the people of Ringwood that I will work hard for you every single day, and I thank you for this honour and privilege.

Members applauded.

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (12:43): I rise to give my address-in-reply to the Governor's speech. Having just completed my third election campaign I would like to take a minute to thank some people, particularly starting with the people of South-West Coast who elected me and gave me the honour to be able to continue to represent them and be their strong voice in the Parliament here in Victoria. It was a challenging election, as they always are, with long, busy days. With 10 strong candidates it was a great show of democracy and something that I always feel very proud to be a part of. We are really, really lucky to live in a country with such a strong democracy, and it is something we should make sure we do everything we can to preserve. My thanks go to the candidates for how they conducted themselves to make sure that that democracy stays well and truly alive.

There are always so many people that take you and support you through such a journey that I am on as a representative of South-West Coast, and like they say it takes a village to raise a child, well, it takes a team to support someone to become the voice of the community and to be hearing and listening and really relevant to that community. I want to thank so many people who supported me, beginning with my childhood friends who I started prep with, some of whom stood on the pre-poll and on election day for me; my nurse friends, some of whom drove from Melbourne to stand on election day handing out how-to-vote cards; my agricultural colleagues and friends from my days dairying for over 20 years, who also did the same thing; and my Indigenous community friends, who I worked with for 15 years as their nurse at the Framlingham Aboriginal community, who supported me through the campaign putting out my corflutes in their homes. I feel very, very privileged to be so well supported.

Of course to my Liberal family and friends who worked so hard, it is a thankless task, so there are some people I do want to specifically talk about and thank. Firstly, Joy and Geoff Howley, your unwavering support, guidance and friendship is astounding. Former Premier Denis Napthine is always ready with great and astute advice. The South-West Coast electorate committee chair and secretary Tony Baxter and Neil Allen tirelessly and often worked on thankless tasks getting things done. Cheryl Bellman, Jan Read and Michele Joliffe, your roster work was a feat of greatness; we always had someone on pre-poll and at all the booths handing things out. Tom Napthine, Russell and Jarrod Hurst and Deb Loraine, your hours on pre-poll were nothing short of a herculean effort. Dom Bushell, Tim Reesink, James Plozza, Vanessa Millard, Ellie Read, Matt Baker, Peter and Mimi Fisher, Ros Saunders, Geoff and Liz Youll, Maria Cameron, Leigh Allen, thank you all for the many and varied things you have done and continue to do for me. To the branches of Port Fairy, Portland, Terang, Warrnambool and Woolsthorpe-Hawkesdale, I am so fortunate to have your support and assistance.

To my office – Belinda, Jarrod 1 and Jarrod 2, Simon and Matthew – some of you have moved on, but you have all been part of the last four years and have helped me, supported me, guided me and given me the ongoing research and support that I needed. The work you do out of hours to support me I am also very grateful for. Of course to my family, I thank you for your patience with me. I am not always as available as you would like. Your understanding and your support and love for me I really do appreciate.

South-West Coast is an amazing part of Victoria, and I am so pleased to call it home. That is why I am really so grateful to be given the honour to continue to be the representative, because we are in a special part of the world. We have got natural beauty, productive agricultural land, a thriving tourism sector, aquaculture, forestry and a sound manufacturing base, but most of all amazing people – people who work hard, people who give so much to their local community through volunteering and the contribution they make through their businesses and raising their families there.

But not all is well in South-West Coast, and for 18 of the last 23 years we have had a government that has ignored very much the situation we have in South-West Coast, and one of those situations that I want to raise to the house's attention today is, firstly, the state of our roads. As I say, for 18 of the last 23 years this government has absolutely ignored south-west Victoria's roads, and consequently they are the worst in the state. We do have a massive problem. It is now getting to the point where it is so dangerous to drive on our roads that our visitors are making comment. I had family say to me over the summer, 'How do I get home to Melbourne a better way than I came, because I am too frightened to go back the same way.' It is seriously worrying when our visitors are concerned, but we are seeing our families worry about taking their children to and from school and bus drivers making comment that it is too high risk a role for them to play taking the lives of other people's children in their hands when the roads are so bad.

Now, people say, 'Oh, it's because there are too many trucks on the road.' Let me state categorically that is not the case. That is not the case. We need the trucks on the road. It would be great to get a lot of them off the road and onto trains, but that is not this government's priority, it seems. Although they will tell us that, the evidence is clear that it is not happening. So the trucks would like to have some of their cargo put onto trains, there is no doubt, but at this point in time that is not the case. The trucks do everything they can to get our product to market, to bring our supplies to and from. It is not their fault, and I want to make that clear. If we do not have trucks, our nation stops.

It is also not the excuse we hear from the government about the weather. Surprisingly in South-West Coast we have had lots of rain every winter for the whole of my entire life. I can tell you about 1992, I can tell you about 1974 or 72 – I cannot remember. We have had massive rain events. When everyone else is complaining about drought, we have got our gumboots covered in mud, and we just shut up because we are not really going to talk about it when everyone else is suffering. But we have wet all the time. Our winters are pretty brutal, and that is why dairying does so well in my part of the world; we like mud.

But these excuses of trucks and of product not being good anymore – you know, the rubble they are using is not good enough – are not true. The research is clear. We know how to build roads. South Australia is doing it really well. Northern Territory have iron ore trucks running over their roads all the time. There are less people in South Australia per kilometre than there are in Victoria. The actual problem is highlighted clearly in the independent report written by the Auditor-General: the government has not got the process right. It is simple: they do not monitor, they do not supervise and they are not holding anyone to account. So our taxpayer dollar is being wasted over and over again filling up potholes or building roads that are not holding up to the processes of today's modern transport system.

Let me say this clearly: if you have to put 300 millimetres of rubble down so that you get a good base and the road holds up, if no-one is watching I reckon you might put in 100 millimetres. I am not saying that is the contractors' fault. I am hearing that the contractors are actually telling the government that the resources they are being given are not enough to build a good road. Let us say the camber is supposed to be 2 per cent; that is so the road does not get undermined by water sitting on top of it. But if they are not getting these processes right, then these roads are literally falling apart within two weeks, three weeks. Before contractors have finished the role and handed it back, it is falling apart. People of South-West Coast have had enough. It is not hard – just get into the department and get it right. Give them the resources, put the processes in place, use the research, make sure the specifications are met and do the job once properly.

There are so many other things in South-West Coast that this government ignores. They talk about all these big promises – the big build promise of building public housing and getting public housing better across Victoria. They have actually said, I think, it is \$30 million for South-West Coast. My calculation is that that would build around maybe 75 homes, and at last count – and this was before the election, because the government withheld the report until after the election of how many people were actually on the waiting list for public housing – it was 900 families. So let us say within the next four years we

build another 75 homes even – and I do not think we have completed the first 75; how is that really going to help those 900 families? That list is growing, so it will still be 900 when 150 of them are housed. It is not going to help, so it is all this massive spin rather than addressing the issue. There is so much more that can be done, because once you have people in public housing not being able to get housed, the supply chain is affected right through. We cannot get enough houses for people to move into to take roles in the community. Unemployment has been 1 to 2 per cent for 10 years – we have got jobs everywhere – but we have not got anywhere to house people.

We also have a major problem with child care. The government made some wonderful announcement about childcare centres they are going to build. Well, in our part of the world there are none in the first rollout of it. It is not until 2028 that Portland will get one. I was speaking to a mum the other day desperate to get child care. Her profession is as a doctor. We really need her in Portland; we need her to stay. She is not going to be able to stay unless she can get child care. This is the catch 22 we are in. We can do so much more. Big announcements like three-year-old kinder being free are fantastic. As she said, and I agree, we do not resent that. That is a great idea. But with that announcement, where was the infrastructure and where were the staff? How can we have an announcement like that without building up to it with training and putting things in place that can actually deliver it? All it did was increase demand, because if I am a stay-at-home mum and now free three-year-old is available, I want to access it, and rightfully so. But it is just putting the demand for child care under more and more pressure.

It is similar with the health situation. The government in the Governor's speech talked very little about regional Victoria. I think they mentioned the word 'regional' twice, like they mentioned the word 'road' once. 'Road' led on to talk about the level crossing removals and the tunnels, and it was absolutely not relevant to south-west Victoria or anywhere in regional Victoria. But this government does not understand what it is like in regional Victoria when you are punching well above your weight, contributing to the state's economy and producing quality food, and the cost of living is just getting out of control.

The people of Terang talk to me at the moment about energy. In the Governor's speech there was a lot said about energy, boasting about how they are going to bring down the price of energy. Well, tell that to the people of Terang who are currently getting letters from their supplier. It is the government's policy that is resulting in this, so it is not the supplier that we are going to shift the blame to here. We are going to put it squarely at the feet of the policies that are not working. Their gas prices are going up by 80 per cent. Gas is what they have supplying their homes. They do not have anything else, and they also do not have any other supplier that they can access. So what are these people supposed to do with an 80 per cent increase in gas bills and no competition? They cannot actually get any gas from anywhere else. What are they going to do to heat their houses over the winter period? I have already talked about how brutal our winters can be. That is a problem the government needs to solve today, not with some fantastic idea that will probably take eight years to deliver, if ever at all, because yesterday in question time we could not even get a time frame as to when this idea is going to bear any fruit with regard to bringing down the price of energy.

There are so many challenges, and all I heard from the Governor's speech was lots of palaver and not much on deliverables or outcomes. If we just had some of that \$30 billion of waste, of cost overruns, that this government has been responsible for when they have tried to build something and obviously have not done the proper planning and do not understand the costs involved. They then find when they have delivered – or have not even got anywhere close to delivering – that they have run over budget extraordinarily, in the billions. Collectively that stands at around \$30 billion at the moment, the waste and cost overruns that this government is responsible for – \$30 billion. That could have done a lot for the people of South-West Coast – to address the childcare issues, to help the Portland hospital deliver services so we do not have women delivering babies on the side of the road, so we can have the basic services, as spoken about so eloquently by the new member for Euroa today, in the regions that we face, that we should have as a basic right.

I am very disappointed that in the Governor's speech regional Victoria was ignored. I am not surprised by that, because even though this Premier talks about governing for all Victorians, that is not the case, and I think I have evidenced that. I could go on forever, but I have got 46 seconds left, so I am not going to waste that. I could continue on, but I would really like to just finish up by saying thank you – thank you to south-west Victoria for electing me to this place again. I will be your strong voice. I will raise the issues that matter. I will make sure our voice is heard and that things like the Lookout drug and rehabilitation centre get funded by this government, our hospitals see people who need to be seen, operations happen to get people out of pain and we have roads that are safe to drive on. I would, lastly, like to issue the invitation to the Premier to come and drive on our roads. I will drive. I know them; I will not hurt you. You probably could not do it yourself, though.

Members applauded.

Nick STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (12:58): This is not going to be my finest contribution, given we are nearly at 1 o'clock. It is my job to see us through to the lunch break, which is a job I have had a number of times over the years in this place; it is just coincidence. I have just enough time to thank the people of Bentleigh, who are my people, for re-electing me – not once, not twice, but three times. It is a huge and singular honour to be the member for Bentleigh and represent the good people of Bentleigh and to deliver for them – to deliver in health, in education, in jobs and in transport for the Bentleigh electorate. There is going to be more to this speech after the break. After some fantastic inaugural speeches by my colleagues, I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge all of the new members of this house and the other house, particularly the 15 new Labor members of the Legislative Assembly and the four new Labor members in the upper house in this third-term Labor government. I know that the next four years will be rewarding for both them and their constituents. We will have a lot of work over the next four years, but each and every one of the 71 members of the Labor caucus is up to the challenge of delivering for their communities and rebuilding after the pandemic experience in this state.

Sitting suspended 1:00 pm until 2:02 pm.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

CityLink tolls

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:02): My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Yesterday Transurban announced recorded toll revenue for the first half of 2022–23, with CityLink toll revenue up 42 per cent to \$446 million, partly through toll escalations. With household cost-of-living pressures rising, is it fair that motorists are paying increased tolls for a tunnel that has not been built?

Melissa HORNE (Williamstown – Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Roads and Road Safety) (14:02): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question about cost-of-living pressures, particularly when it comes to roads. In relation to the concession deeds for Transurban that is a question probably better directed at the Treasurer. However, can I say that the Andrews Labor government is investing heavily in our road system. We are –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I will not tolerate this constant across-the-chamber.

Melissa HORNE: The Andrews Labor government obviously is investing heavily in making sure that our road network is maintained and that we have got an extensive program of building new roads so that we can get people to and from work efficiently and around the network.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I would like to hear the questions in silence.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:03): With CityLink record profits based on a 4.25 per cent increase each year in tolls, will the government now apologise for putting the profits of Transurban ahead of families?

Melissa HORNE (Williamstown – Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Roads and Road Safety) (14:04): I am sorry, but I do reject the premise of this question, because this is a government that does not step away from working with private partners to be able to build the vital infrastructure that we need to move Victorians around the state. This is a concession deed that was signed under the previous Liberal government, and this is something that we will continue –

John Pesutto: And extended under you.

Melissa HORNE: If you want to keep talking at me and talking over the top of me, because that is what is you do with women –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much crossing across the chamber and a lot of loud noise. I cannot hear the answers, and I want to hear the questions and the answers. I ask the Leader of the Opposition in particular to refrain from constant interjection across the table. Other members will be removed without warning.

Ministers statements: Wonthaggi Hospital

Daniel ANDREWS (Mulgrave – Premier) (14:05): I am very pleased to update the house on our recent visit to Wonthaggi Hospital. Bass Coast Health do a fantastic job. The members of the management team there, every single clinician and every member of staff, they work hard to provide the best care to a beautiful part of our state – a proud community and one that doubles in size every summer because of its noted status as a great tourism destination. Of course we were there, the member for Bass and I and the Minister for Health, to officially open stage 1 of the redeveloped Wonthaggi Hospital – \$115 million worth of investment. We are committed to delivering stage 2 – some \$290 million worth of investment. Of course you would be pretty confident that those who delivered stage 1 will get on and deliver stage 2, and that is exactly what we will do. This is the best way to say thank you to our nurses, to our ambos, to cooks, cleaners and ward clerks and to communities who have been through so much in recent years. This project is one of literally hundreds of projects in rural and regional health services to upgrade equipment, upgrade infrastructure, recruit more staff, treat more patients and provide better care. Whilst there are some who run down our rural and regional health system, we are instead –

Members interjecting.

Daniel ANDREWS: Well, self-identification is everything. I simply said ‘there are some’, and others are very offended by that. The Regional Health Infrastructure Fund has funded some \$790 million worth of projects – or, to put it another way, 630-plus projects have been funded right across rural and regional Victoria. Health services are critically important. We do not close hospitals. We do not privatise hospitals. We do not privatise hospitals or sell them; we rebuild them and we staff them properly.

State Electricity Commission

David HODGETT (Croydon) (14:07): My question is to the minister for the SEC. I refer the minister to concerns expressed by Dr Alan Finkel that the SEC owning and controlling future renewable energy infrastructure in this state could undermine private sector investment, stating:

You don’t want to crowd out private sector funding as we make this important but complex transition ...

Does the minister agree with Dr Finkel's concerns?

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (14:08): I thank the member for his question. It is not unanticipated, to be honest, because, look, they are quite predictable on that side. They predictably lose elections, they predictably do not learn from the election results and of course the member cannot be more wrong than what they are in terms of what Dr Alan Finkel said.

Members interjecting.

Lily D'AMBROSIO: Well, the context is everything here, including an election result that actually put you back in your context well and truly: they voted for the return of the SEC. They voted for the return of the SEC. We sought the cream of national leaders for our expert advisory panel to establish the SEC, making sure that we get the investment mandate right, making sure that we get the scope, if you like, of the SEC –

John Pesutto interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! Leader of the Opposition, you are not immune from being removed from the chamber, and I do ask you to listen to my rulings about speaking across the table.

Lily D'AMBROSIO: Thank you very much, Speaker. Can I just say that the energy transition is big. The energy transition is complex, and this government knows how complex it is, but we get on and get it done. And that is why Dr Finkel is not incorrect when it comes to the scope of the work that needs to be done to get renewable energy built here in Victoria.

Mark my words, the SEC will be driving the biggest investment in new energy that the whole country will see right here in Victoria – 59,000 jobs, including 6000 apprenticeships and traineeships, creating the new energy of the future. Let me share something; let me share some pearls of wisdom with those opposite. There is going to be so much work in this state, where we continue to this very day having investors – private sector investors – coming to our state, saying, 'We want to invest more in your state because we know that the degree of your ambition means that we are absolutely welcome. Our investment dollars are absolutely welcome in this state.' But let me be really, really clear on this front – yes, Mr Pesutto, listen and learn something, mate, rather than talking across the table, undermining the women who get up here. I digress because you lot over there are one big digression.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier will come to order. The member for Sunbury can leave the chamber for 1 hour.

Member for Sunbury withdrew from chamber.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, I am sure we all hoped that the adoption of the sessional orders would have improved the debate in the chamber during question time, but sadly, sadly, that appears not to be the case. I would ask you to ask the minister to stop debating the question and to call the Premier to order for his behaviour across the chamber.

Mary-Anne Thomas: On the point of order, Speaker, there is no point of order, I am sure, and I hope that you will agree that the minister was directly responding to the question. If only those on the other side would be quiet, then they would hear exactly what the minister was saying.

The SPEAKER: The minister was being relevant to the question. Before I let the minister continue, can I ask the members at the table to be respectful of those on their feet.

Lily D'AMBROSIO: This government is absolutely proud of the investment and the relationship that we have built up through our ambitious renewable energy targets. From the day the Andrews Labor government was elected the door has been open to that investment, and we are leading the country in that investment, unlike those opposite, who shut it down. Not one job came out of the

renewable energy decisions that they made. We continue to lead the way. We are going to have a bonanza of renewable energy jobs, and the SEC will be driving that every step of the way.

David HODGETT (Croydon) (14:13): Does the minister also agree with Dr Finkel's comments that:

There is a role for gas in providing firming capacity during these transition years ...

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (14:13): I thank the member for the supplementary question, but if he wants to start playing these games I would like them to put on the record whether they actually have any ambition in the management or the transition of our renewable energy sector other than fracking.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the minister was asked a very direct question, which was simply a quote. There was no debate in the question; it was simply a quote. I would ask you to draw the minister back to the question.

The SPEAKER: The minister was being relevant, and she was providing context.

Lily D'AMBROSIO: Thank you very much, Speaker. Look, I will be really clear, and those who want to learn may actually do well from learning from this side of the house. When it comes to a transition, it is a complex process, one that requires commitment, diligence and top-level advice from a range of fantastic people who absolutely endorse and embrace the opportunity to be part of this expert panel. We will get it done. We know that we need to decarbonise our energy system. As we have always said, this does not happen in one day. Some people like to talk about it happening in one day, others do not want it to happen at all and just want to frack our environment.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, again on the response not being direct: the minister, you ruled, had been providing context. We are now three-quarters of the way through the answer, and we have not got anywhere near a response to the direct question in relation to whether the minister agrees with the quote provided to her.

The SPEAKER: The minister was being relevant in her answer to your question. I cannot direct the minister to answer the question the way you want her to.

Lily D'AMBROSIO: Only Labor can be trusted to deliver the transition that is well and truly underway, creating those thousands of jobs, reducing our emissions and reducing energy prices for Victorians. Victorians voted resoundingly in November for our government to continue to do this work.

Ministers statements: regional employment

Tim PALLAS (Werribee – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Trade and Investment) (14:15): It gives me great pleasure to update the house on the state's latest regional employment figures. With 156,000 new jobs created over the past eight years, it is clear that regional Victoria is in a class of its own when it comes to job creation. In November 2014 there were over 46,000 unemployed regional Victorians. There are now nearly half that figure, at a tick over 23,000. So not only are we creating jobs but we are reducing the level of unemployment. Indeed, unemployment in regional Victoria in November 2014 was 6.6 per cent.

Daniel Andrews: How much?

Tim PALLAS: 6.6 per cent. It is now just 2.8 per cent, the lowest it has been since records began and equal lowest in the nation. How have so many jobs been created in regional Victoria? It is no accident. This government has invested over \$36 billion in regional Victoria over the past eight years. Now, compare that to the \$7.2 billion between November 2010 and November 2014. Payroll tax in regional Victoria is just one-quarter of the payroll tax level for metropolitan Melbourne and the lowest rate in the nation, while stamp duty concessions for eligible commercial, industrial and extractive businesses in regional Victoria add to the attraction to start a business and of course to hire workers in

regional Victoria. If those opposite want to know why regional Victoria supports this job creation agenda, I suggest that they talk to the member for Ripon. I suggest that the reason that member is in this Parliament is that she understands the needs and the aspirations of regional Victorians – their desire for jobs – and I welcome her to the chamber. The numbers are in, and it is great to be living in regional Victoria.

Maribyrnong River flood review

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (14:18): My question is to the minister representing the Minister for Water. Yesterday Mr Nick Wimbush stood down as chair of the Maribyrnong River flood review. When did the government first become aware that Mr Wimbush had a conflict of interest?

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (14:18): I thank the member for his question, and I think I would care to disagree with the member's proposition that there was a conflict of interest – that is very clear as my response to that. But I also want to be really clear that an independent review is being undertaken by Melbourne Water, as it should be, absolutely. Certainly I know that the Minister for Water – I am representing her in this chamber – and we as a government collectively are very much looking forward to the outcome of this review. It is Melbourne Water, not the government, that conduct these reviews. They are a board established independently to manage Melbourne water, and certainly we look forward to them conducting and completing this inquiry. It is an independent process, and consultations are available to all victims to do that. We are very clear that lots of those conversations are happening right across the state as a result of those floods, notwithstanding that of course the people of Maribyrnong –

Peter Walsh: On a point of order, Speaker, on the issue of relevance, the question was very clearly asking: when did the government first become aware of Mr Wimbush's conflict of interest? I would ask you to bring the minister back to answering that question, please.

The SPEAKER: The minister is being relevant to the question that was asked about a review and conflict of interest.

Lily D'AMBROSIO: We look forward to that work being undertaken and completed, and I am sure that the Minister for Water will look forward to receiving the independent report coming to her, upon which the government will take appropriate consideration of any findings or recommendations that come from that.

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (14:20): Why did the government's probity auditor fail to inform the government that Mr Wimbush had a conflict of interest?

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (14:20): I thank the member for the supplementary question. It is effectively redundant, the supplementary question, but I will say again that we certainly disagree. There was no conflict of interest at the heart of the decisions that have been taken. Again, this is an independent investigation of course run by an independent board, subject to probity considerations for Melbourne Water to account for, and I am very confident that that is exactly what they are doing. We look forward to the final report coming to government.

Ministers statements: public transport

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Industry and Innovation, Minister for Manufacturing Sovereignty, Minister for Employment, Minister for Public Transport) (14:21): It is my pleasure to update the house on how the Andrews government will deliver cheaper fares, more frequent services and more comfortable trains for rural and regional Victoria. Capping regional fares at the same price as metropolitan Melbourne's goes to the heart of what this government is all about: transport equity. What is good for Melbourne's CBD is good for the far-flung parts of our state.

Members interjecting.

Ben CARROLL: I will come to the shadow minister over there – the member for Polwarth – don't you worry about that. In some parts of the state you can pay up to \$92 to come to the CBD. The equivalent of a full fare in metropolitan Melbourne is \$9.20. We are going to make that the same for regional Victoria. Speaker, for you in Bendigo, or for the Deputy Premier, the current fare is nearly \$70. We are going to make that \$9.20. In Geelong the current fare is nearly \$30. We are going to make that \$9.20, a saving of nearly \$20. I think the shadow – oh, he has gone quiet. If he goes from Colac in his electorate, it is currently \$40. I am encouraging him to get on the public transport system as the Shadow Minister for Public Transport. It will go down to \$9.20.

Can I say, in terms of the opposition policy that they took to the election, what did the Public Transport Association have to say about their fares?

The danger of such a deep cut in fares is that it starves the system of funding for upgrades ...

We are doing more than that. Every new member of the Parliament needs to know that when it comes to rolling stock, with our 10,000 jobs and our \$8 billion investment we are delivering more regional trains than ever before, and we going to get on with doing it – 23 VLocities. Compare that to those opposite when they were last in office. The ACT had a bigger rolling stock agenda than those opposite, and they do not have a train network. *(Time expired)*

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Malvern can leave the chamber for 1 hour.

Member for Malvern withdrew from chamber.

Native forest logging

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (14:24): My question is to the Premier. Premier, over the last few years Victoria's state-owned logging company, VicForests, has been found to be illegally logging in many areas. So many in fact that the courts have now prevented them from logging across most of the state. In response, VicForests has begun logging in new areas like the Wombat State Forest, which the government promised to turn into a national park, and has even proposed logging in the Dandenong Ranges National Park and around our premier bushwalking trail in the High Country. The question is: does the government believe it is appropriate to log in national parks or areas that are supposed to become national parks?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Berwick will leave the chamber for 1 hour.

Member for Berwick withdrew from chamber.

Daniel ANDREWS (Mulgrave – Premier) (14:25): I thank the member for Melbourne for her question. First of all, the member is right to say that VicForests have been prevented from logging in a number of settings because of legal action, and I will make no comment about that legal action, given that some of it may well be the subject of further court time. There may be appeals, there may be other processes, and I would not want to cut across those even in this place. It is not appropriate to do that.

In terms of the assertions that the honourable member makes in relation to logging in national parks, there are a number of protections as a function of statute, and we expect they are observed by all. As a political party that in government has added to our forest network, properly protecting both biodiversity and assets that are owned by every single Victorian today, tomorrow and into the future, I can proudly say that where there are structures, where there are rules, where there are protections, then it is the government's expectation that they are observed by all at all times. I do not want to quarrel with the member for Melbourne, but I think her characterisation of what has or has not occurred in the Wombat State Forest is not accurate, and there are many, including some traditional owners, that

would take a very different view of what is occurring in that beautiful, pristine part of our state. It is somewhat disappointing. I am not for a moment questioning the honourable member for Melbourne's interest and passion about these issues, but it is incumbent on all of us to at least attempt to describe what is going on in accurate terms, particularly when we are talking about a partnership with First Nations Victorians that ought to be singled out for praise, not to be the subject of mischaracterisation. That may well be for many particularly offensive.

The legal action that the member refers to ought not be the subject of debate, but it is material and it is obvious that native timber supplies are under significant pressure, logging activity is under significant pressure, this industry is under pressure. We as a government instead of pretending otherwise were very clear with timber communities and indeed all Victorians when we laid down a comprehensive 10-year plan to transition out of native timber logging, because we knew then and we know now that this industry from a supply point of view is not sustainable. Now, I do not expect everyone in this chamber to agree with me in that, and I have nothing but respect for those timber communities. That is why we are standing with them through what is an incredibly difficult transition. It is only made harder by misinformation and people who ignore realities and make easy decisions instead of providing leadership.

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (14:28): As the Premier knows, most native forest logging in Victoria is done simply to make cheap photocopy paper. Logging is subsidised by the state government, and last year the industry lost over \$50 million. The Premier mentioned in his answer that the industry is clearly unsustainable. Shouldn't we now admit that we should not be making paper out of endangered species' habitat, and is it not time to bring forward the transition out of native forest logging?

Daniel ANDREWS (Mulgrave – Premier) (14:28): I do thank the member for Melbourne for her supplementary question. I am not sure whether she was reading off some hemp Sanskrit or something, but I think your –

Ellen Sandell interjected.

Daniel ANDREWS: Well, I am not sure what you were reading off, but regardless of what you wrote it on, it is simply incorrect. I do not want to misquote her, but I think the member for Melbourne insinuated that most native timber logging is simply for the purposes of making paper. That is simply wrong. It is a by-product of sawlogs that are used for a good deal of other materials. The Green contingent up there can laugh, but the facts are very, very clear. You have got the bottom of the tree and you have got the top. You have got the by-product and you have got the principal sawlog. If the member for Melbourne would like a briefing on these matters in the hope, albeit maybe a vain hope, that we might all have a more accurate picture of what is actually going on in coupes and mills and timber communities, I am more than happy to facilitate that and perhaps elevate this debate to facts instead of fiction.

Ministers statements: regional economy

Natalie SULEYMAN (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Youth) (14:30): There is good news to tell about regional small businesses. They are critical to our regional communities and economy, and with small businesses making up one in four of the Victorian business community, the Andrews Labor government is backing our regional small businesses every step of the way. Our Small Business Bus supports small businesses across Victoria. Just last year we visited 82 businesses in the regions. These visits provide businesses with the support they need to succeed. We are also delivering grants to traders groups –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for Eildon can leave the chamber for 1 hour.

Member for Eildon withdrew from chamber.

Natalie SULEYMAN: which give experts in their communities support to deliver local solutions and opportunities.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Business Mount Alexander, who connected with over 170 people from local businesses at their Creative Connections Conference last year. Thanks to our grants we were able to fund workshops, networking events and an industry panel of experts to assist those small businesses. Initiatives like this show how the Andrews Labor government is supporting small businesses in our regions. We work hand in hand with small businesses, whether it is in the regions or in Melbourne. Let me say, the numbers speak for themselves. We had over 11,000 new small businesses opening in regional Victoria just last year – 11,000 businesses, that is right. The Andrews Labor government will always back regional Victoria’s small businesses and deliver the best outcomes.

Mildura electorate health services

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (14:31): My question is to the Minister for Health. Can the minister guarantee that Mildura Base Public Hospital, Mallee Track Health and Community Service and Robinvale District Health Services will retain independent boards and governance and not be merged under this government?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Premier to come to order.

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (14:32): I thank the member for her question. I know she has only recently arrived in this place and may well not know that in fact it was a Liberal–National government that privatised Mildura hospital, and it was the Andrews Labor government that brought it back into public hands. So let us be clear: there would be no public hospital in Mildura if it were not for the Andrews Labor government. Let us be perfectly clear –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the member asked a very direct question, asking for a guarantee. The minister, I take it, is providing more context, but I would ask the minister if she would return back to the question.

Daniel Andrews: On the point of order, Speaker, the member for Mildura, as she is perfectly entitled to, has asked a question about the Mildura public hospital and the governance of the Mildura public hospital. As a public hospital, and it has not always been a public hospital, the minister is perfectly entitled under the standing orders to go to exactly that – the governance, the ownership, the fact that Mildura public hospital is for patients, not profits – in her answer.

The SPEAKER: The Minister for Health was being relevant.

Mary-Anne THOMAS: Thank you very much. As I was pointing out, we now have a public board managing a public hospital. They are appointed by me, as the minister, but they are an independent board who are able to have conversations with other health services whenever and wherever they like. But let me say this to you: it is very, very important – very important – that the new member for Mildura does not fall into the trap of the member for Lowan, who deliberately went out to court fear and concern in her communities to the detriment of the health of her –

David Southwick: On a point of order, Speaker, I would ask you to bring the minister back to answering the question. Question time is not the time to attack the opposition, and I would ask the minister to please come back to answering a very important question about ruling out privatisation of these hospitals.

The SPEAKER: I do ask the minister to come back to the Mildura hospital.

Mary-Anne THOMAS: I have completed my answer.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (14:35): On behalf of concerned communities, can you guarantee that by maintaining the independence of health services in the north-west corner of Victoria there will not be a loss of services such as childcare and aged care services in Ouyen that are run by Mallee Track Health and Community Service?

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (14:36): The Andrews Labor government continues to make all decisions informed by the needs of communities from right across Victoria. From Mildura to Swan Hill to Ouyen we will keep delivering for the people of rural and regional Victoria, and can I say we will not be privatising aged care services. We will not privatise health services. We believe in public health services for all.

Emma Kealy: On a point of order, Speaker, I ask you to bring the member back to the question that was asked. It was a very narrow question. Can she guarantee the services currently offered by Mallee Track will continue to be offered into the future and those important services, including child care, will continue to be provided? I ask the minister to come back to answering that question. Can she guarantee it or not?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: A point of order is not an opportunity to repeat the question. I ask the minister to come back to the question that was asked.

Mary-Anne THOMAS: I will be very clear. Our government is not in the business of cutting services –

Brad Rowswell: On a further point of order, Speaker, members are entitled to be heard in silence. The member for Lowan was on her feet legitimately raising a point of order and she was not able to do so in silence because of the wall of noise being perpetrated at her by those on the government benches. I would ask you, Speaker, in further opportunities when those points of order are raised, to please do your best to keep the government members especially in order.

The SPEAKER: I think that there has been disruption on both sides of the chamber today, and I do not place blame on either side for that. Obviously I would ask all members to be respectful of those on their feet, as I have said consistently through question time today. That was not a point of order.

Mary-Anne THOMAS: I can assure the member for Mildura that our government is not in the business of cutting, closing or privatising services to rural and regional Victoria, in direct contrast to the record of the National Party in this place.

Ministers statements: Commonwealth Games

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery) (14:39): The countdown is on. In 1133 days time Victoria will be hosting the 2026 Commonwealth Games, and regional Victoria will be home to those games. The Andrews Labor government has grabbed with both hands the opportunity to bring the games to regional Victoria. The benefits will be significant and the legacy long-lasting, and I am delighted to update the house today on the huge amount of work that is going on in planning and preparation to deliver the games. We have got early works underway for four athlete villages in Geelong, Morwell, Ballarat and Bendigo, with major construction to start later in the year. These villages will create jobs during the construction phase and be new homes to families in regional Victoria once the games are over. During the games the villages will be home to 7200 athletes and officials, who will be competing in 20 sports, including nine parasports, and it is a smorgasbord of sports for the two weeks of the games. There is women's T20 cricket, badminton, rugby sevens and shooting heading across to the Latrobe Valley.

In Ballarat I know our members for Wendouree and Eureka are looking forward to seeing boxing and athletics, and of course the home of Steve Moneghetti is hosting the marathon as well. The member for Ripon is going to be looking forward to checking out the mountain bike activities at Creswick. And, Speaker, this one is for you and me: we are hosting in Bendigo the basketball, the netball, the track cycling, lawn bowls, squash and table tennis. There is a festival of cycling over in Shepparton with road race and BMX events, and the members for Geelong, Lara and Bellarine and my parliamentary secretary the member for South Barwon will see nine sports: swimming, hockey, beach volleyball, gymnastics, weightlifting, T20 cricket and triathlon, plus in a games first, coastal rowing, and I know some are interested in golf coming to the Commonwealth Games. Plus the closing ceremony will be at Kardinia Park, rebuilt by successive Labor governments. It is going to be a great games for all of Victoria.

Constituency questions

Polwarth electorate

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (14:42): (1) My question is to the Minister for Health. Can the Minister for Health please tell the people of the Geelong, Surf Coast and Colac Otway regions what she plans to do to replace the 30 per cent loss to critical and important maternity services in the Geelong region? The minister and her Geelong representatives have been asleep at the wheel as they have allowed a 30 per cent reduction in the availability of maternity suites to women and families across not only Geelong but south-west Victoria. The minister well knows she is responsible for workforce planning. Her excuse that there are not enough medical professionals in the Geelong region is entirely at her behest, and it is her responsibility to ensure that the fastest growing region in Australia has the necessary family services to support growing families, to support jobs and to support the welfare of all.

Wendouree electorate

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (14:43): (2) My constituency question is for the Minister for Public Transport. Would the minister please provide me with an update on the Andrews Labor government's plan for cheaper regional public transport fares? Fairer fares are a game changer for my community and indeed all Victorians. As someone born and bred in Ballarat, I have been a V/Line passenger for decades, relying on the Ballarat to Melbourne service to get to uni and to work, as well as using V/Line to get to events like the cricket, the footy and concerts. With cost-of-living pressures increasing, Victorians are looking for ways to save money. One way our government is addressing the pressures is by capping regional public transport fares at the metro rate of \$9.20. This is a significant saving for a daily peak return fare from Ballarat to Melbourne, with the fare slashed from \$45.60 to \$9.20. This will deliver a massive saving for passengers, particularly those who catch the train to and from Melbourne multiple times a week. I cannot wait to report back to my community about fairer public transport fares.

Lowan electorate

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (14:44): (3) My question is for the Minister for Environment, and the information I seek is: when will the decision be made to hand management of the Peter Francis Points Arboretum in Coleraine back to a local committee of management? The management of the Points arboretum was shifted across to Parks Victoria some years ago. It houses the largest collection of Australian natives in the world. It is a fabulous place to go, and I recommend if you are in the south-west of the state you do drop by and have a look. However, while it was pristine under a local committee of management, since Parks have been allocated that responsibility – with no resources allocated at all – it has significantly deteriorated, and many locals are now embarrassed by the Points. There were meetings late last year between the Points association, who do a fabulous job – they are very much engaged and want to continue to manage this great asset for all Australians – and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, as it was then known. There was a commitment and an agreement that the management will be handed over. (*Time expired*)

Tarneit electorate

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (14:45): (4) My question is to the Minister for Education. Tarneit is one of the fastest growing communities in Australia, and it shows no sign of slowing down. This growth is driven by young families, who need high-quality services and modern schools. I am pleased to see the investment being made in Tarneit under the Andrews Labor government and was delighted to join Minister Hutchins in opening Karwan Primary School and Nearnung Primary School last week. My question to the minister is: how much capital investment in schools has been made by the Victorian government in Tarneit since 2014? A quality education system with first-class facilities is an important part of our society, and I am proud to be part of a government that delivers exactly that for the people of Victoria.

Nepean electorate

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (14:46): (5) Residents in Nepean have become increasingly affected by the dangerous and overcrowded Jetty Road intersection, which continues to be the site of countless accidents, both minor and major. During my campaign for election in 2022 I worked with the community to relentlessly prosecute the need for investment and improvement, including ensuring that the changing federal government reaffirmed its \$75 million commitment to redeveloping the area. However, the state government has still not given my community a clear time line on when this project will be delivered. The Mornington Peninsula Freeway extension is a vital piece of major infrastructure for my community, ensuring safety and supporting the growing local and visitor population. My question is for the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure: what are the government's plans – if any – for the Mornington Peninsula Freeway extension, and when will the project finally be delivered?

Ringwood electorate

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (14:47): (6) My constituency question is directed to the Minister for Energy and Resources. Minister, how many homes in the Ringwood electorate have accessed the \$250 power saving bonus, and what is the total amount of funding provided to my constituents? There is no doubt that Victorians are facing real cost-of-living challenges as prices of essential goods and services continue to rise. Thankfully, the Andrews Labor government is committed to backing families and protecting household budgets. The power saving bonus program is a simple and effective way to deliver tangible support. Every single household in the Ringwood electorate is eligible for a \$250 cash payment. All householders need to do is get their power bill, spare 5 minutes and apply at compare.energy.vic.gov.au. Not only will they receive a \$250 cash payment, but this great Victorian government online tool helps families find a better deal on energy bills, and my constituents are telling me they are saving thousands on their bills every year. This is real support for hardworking Victorians.

Warrandyte electorate

Ryan SMITH (Warrandyte) (14:48): (7) I would like to raise a matter for the Minister for Health in relation to a seven-year-old girl in my electorate who must undergo heart surgery. The Royal Children's Hospital first advised that this surgery could be up to a year away, but following another consultation this has now blown out to three years. I would like to ask the minister: can she work with me to expedite this surgery? I am sure many of us could imagine the stress that we would all feel if this was one of our own children. The family does not want their name publicly raised, but if the minister needs more detail I am happy to provide that privately.

Laverton electorate

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (14:48): (8) My question is for the Minister for Environment in the other place. As the minister is well aware, the issue of air quality in Melbourne's inner west is something that our government takes very seriously. It is no secret that heavily industrialised areas in the western suburbs do have a negative impact on air quality, and this in turn can have consequential health impacts on residents in suburbs that neighbour industrial blocks. Last year we announced a \$20 million air quality package to address this particular issue in the inner west, and it is something I

know my colleagues the member for Footscray and the member for Williamstown worked very hard on. So my question for the minister is this: how will this \$20 million investment address air quality issues in Melbourne's inner west?

Gippsland South electorate

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (14:49): (9) My question is to the Minister for Environment, and I ask: when will the minister act on the erosion that is continuing to wash away the Lake Victoria foreshore in Loch Sport? I first raised this matter in, I think, 2017, and we have had nothing from the government but reports, consultants and inquiries – no actual action. In August of 2021 BMT Commercial Australia produced a report that was finally released last year to the community which highlighted a number of options to address the erosion. The installation of groynes in the water to reduce the erosion was overwhelmingly backed by the community and has clearly worked in other parts of the foreshore where they have already been installed. We have got tracks being washed away, public land being washed away and private land, ultimately. We need action. I ask the minister to let us know when there will be action taken to address this erosion issue.

Northcote electorate

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (14:50): (10) My question is to the Minister for Environment, and I ask: how will the Victorian government's ban on single-use plastics directly benefit constituents in Northcote? Northcote is known for its leadership in sustainability. We know how harmful single-use plastics are and the problem waste they create. As the member for Northcote I am proud to represent people like Amelia Trompf. Amelia volunteers her Sundays to run a reusable cup wash station at Alphington farmers market and works on Project Pair Up, reuniting rogue Tupperware containers with their long-lost lids. We have had long conversations about reducing plastic pollution, and I know she and other locals have many ideas for future reform. Minister, we need to move on from a culture of take, use, dispose. We need a genuinely circular economy, and Northcote is at the heart of that mission. I will keep doing everything in my power to promote local initiatives like Amelia's as well as support statewide reform like our plastics ban, container deposit scheme and glass bin rollout. We look forward to hearing the minister's response.

Address to Parliament

Governor's speech

Address-in-reply

Debate resumed.

Nick STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (14:51): It is a pleasure to continue my address-in-reply to the Governor's speech. I have been privileged over the last eight years to have been a member of this house, since the time that the Andrews government was elected. It does give you cause, upon the election for a third term, to reflect on the first term. The first term was all about kicking off the Big Build level crossing removals, and my electorate was certainly a significant early beneficiary of the level crossing removal program. Now 110 level crossings are to be removed – I think 67 have been removed so far – but there is also the Metro Tunnel, which is going to transform Melbourne. It was also about that historic Royal Commission into Family Violence, and the government has just announced that we have now implemented each and every single one of those recommendations. It was also a time when we – again in an Australian first – legislated nurse-to-patient ratios. It was because this side of the house genuinely cares about the public health system. It was also a time when – at least at that time – we achieved the best possible ambulance response times on record, following a war on our paramedics that was declared by the former Liberal government.

We then of course moved on to the second term, and a lot happened in the second term as well. We continued the Big Build by commencing the Suburban Rail Loop, the Big Housing Build and the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System. But what the second term will be

remembered for is the pandemic. At this point I want to thank each and every one of Victoria's healthcare workers, who provided the ballast that held our state up during this period, and we are still going through the pandemic. I have spoken to many nurses from my electorate; lots and lots of nurses live in my electorate. Certainly in the first year of the pandemic nurses would tell me that they were frightened by what was to come; by the second year of the pandemic they expressed how burnt out they were. Every day we need to thank our nurses for really doing the heavy lifting during this difficult period – and our doctors too. I want to give a shout-out to my Aunty Dora, a doctor with Monash Health but who in 2020 spent a year at the Royal Melbourne Hospital. While during that time some people were aggrieved that they could not attend certain events like the grand prix, at that time my aunty was treating COVID patients at the Royal Melbourne Hospital. Sometimes it is easy to forget that it was during that exact same period of time that places around the world like New York, for instance, were using refrigerated trucks as morgues as the body count built up. We seem to forget that this was a global pandemic. This was and continues to be a virus that killed millions upon millions of people throughout the world.

I think the pandemic really did call upon leaders and politicians to bring out the best of politics, and certainly the pandemic demonstrated the best and the worst of politics. Certainly the best of politics really is being prepared to work with other governments of a different political hue to get through this pandemic. It is about listening to actual experts, not self-appointed experts – and we have encountered many self-appointed experts over the last few years. The best of politics during a pandemic is being prepared to front up every day and explain the decisions that are being made and communicating with the public. As the Premier said on election night, the best of politics is being prepared to do what is right, not always doing what is popular, and it is fair to say we did not always see the best of politics.

What we saw from those opposite I think was in many ways the worst of politics, and sometimes I would sit in this place in disbelief at what was going on. What got the other side out of bed each and every day during the pandemic was how they could undermine the public health response to the pandemic. That was very clear during that last term. Every announcement and every decision that was being made with the benefit of expert advice during that time, because it was made by a Labor government, they were going to oppose, they were going to undermine. They behaved differently to every other opposition in this country at the time. Other oppositions worked constructively with those who were in power – not this lot. When the population was vaccinated for the most part, when a lot of our restrictions were eased off, suddenly the opposition changed tack and pretended to care about the public health system. The same party that closed hospitals – they have closed more hospitals than they have actually opened in government, this mob – the same mob who sacked thousands of nurses when they had the chance, the same mob who continuously, consistently undermined the public health message suddenly wanted Victorians to believe that they cared about the public health system. Well, nobody believed them. That is the reality: nobody believed them.

I think they reached peak Trump in this place when we were debating the pandemic legislation here in this house – and I remember it well – in 2021. It was really a difficult time in this Parliament. Protesters surrounded the building, some of them wheeled out gallows and waved nooses around outside on the front steps of Parliament, and those opposite fraternised with those people as though the people who assembled out the front of this Parliament were mainstream Victoria. Well, they were not mainstream Victoria, and this party is no longer a mainstream political party. They demonstrated that very clearly at the last election, and that is why in this third-term government they are in such low numbers.

But I said before that they reached peak Trump, and there is something very concerning taking place in our politics in this state. Standing on pre-poll during this last election, like all of us, I would stand there handing out our how-to-vote cards for 11 days straight and would be listening to Liberal Party candidates and volunteers. As they hand out the how-to-vote card they recite a slogan, usually something like 'Sack Dan' or 'Fix the health system', but at one point toward the end of the pre-poll period I heard the words from a Liberal volunteer to a voter, 'Lock him up'. Where have we heard that before? We have heard that before because Trumpism unfortunately has started to infect that side of

politics. I raise that today because it is something that we have to nip in the bud. Earlier today the member for South-West Coast, who I sometimes agree with, said something that I absolutely agree with in her address-in-reply to the Governor's speech. She said that we are really lucky to live in a country with a strong democracy and we should do everything we can to preserve it. I absolutely believe everything the member said in that regard, but unfortunately we have seen such behaviour over the last few years that has done the exact opposite.

It is important also in the time that I have got left to reflect on the role that the media played in the last election, and in doing so reflect on social media, which really does mean that everyone has a platform. It can be used for good and bad, but it also makes it easy to propagate things that are untrue, and in many cases conspiracy theories. We have seen where blatant lies can be presented as the truth, especially if they are repeated often enough, and the pandemic compounded this problem because it gave conspiracy theorists and figures on the hard right more material to work with. For the most part the mainstream media ignored these conspiracy theorists, but I think we do need to talk a bit about the *Herald Sun*. I do not think anyone could claim that it is unbiased. Many of us on the left side of politics used to say about the *Herald Sun*, 'Well, look, it's right-wing propaganda. It doesn't change a vote', and I think even they have accepted that they do not influence elections anymore. If they did, we would not have won in 2014, 2018 and 2022. But what they do now in many ways is far worse, and during this campaign I was sickened when I saw some of the front pages, where they actually reached into the darkest corners of the internet and tried to legitimise some very, very sick conspiracy theories – the sorts of conspiracy theories that you would find in the same parts of the internet as conspiracy theories about the Port Arthur massacre. This is what we are talking about. These are the sorts of crazy ideas that were put out there and were legitimised by something that was meant to be one of the biggest newspapers in the country.

I raise all of this because there was a time when both sides used to be grateful that our politics was not the politics of America, but I tell you what, we are on a slow march to American politics, and it really is up to politicians from both sides of the aisle, but also up to the media, to ensure that we do not get there, and I hope that we do not.

I also just want to briefly talk about a few of the important things that we committed to in the Bentleigh electorate during this campaign: rebuilding Cheltenham Secondary College, rebuilding McKinnon Secondary College, a new oval for Ormond Primary School and completely rebuilding the sports pavilion at Mackie Road Reserve. I am proud of our record of achievement in the Bentleigh electorate over the last eight years, and I am looking forward to that continuing.

Members applauded.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (15:03): It is a privilege to rise and make some comments in my address-in-reply. Can I begin by thanking my constituents of Caulfield that have given me the privilege and honour to serve another term here in the Parliament of Victoria. For those who watched the election, particularly on election night and in the lead-up to it, it was certainly a tight race. It started tight before the election even began, with me, before the redistribution, only holding Caulfield by a couple of hundred votes but notionally it being a Labor-held seat going into the election with the redivision. So it was always going to be a tough election. We did see the Labor Party and the teals, but particularly the Labor Party, throw absolutely everything at Caulfield. I say to every minister, including the Premier, who I think visited Caulfield on three occasions, 'Welcome to Caulfield. Thank you for visiting. You're welcome back. This time I will buy the bagels – I will buy the food – and also show you the things that need to be done in Caulfield, following on from the promises that were made in the visits that you had, but also some of the deficiencies that we have had over a number of years that have been neglected.'

Can I say even during this election, where if there was any opportunity for the Labor Party to win Caulfield, this would have been the time, there were still a number of key areas that were neglected, which I want to refer to, that the government really needs to pick up, one being education. If I look at

education particularly, we have schools over a hundred years old in my electorate, and many of them have hardly seen a lick of paint. We have pushed and pushed, and we had a candidate promise a whole range of things and talk to a whole lot of various principals and parents about fixing things. I am pleased to say that after we promised an \$11 million upgrade to Caulfield South Primary School, the government then followed a week or so afterwards and matched that promise. I look forward to being able to effectively deliver that upgrade for Caulfield South Primary School, and I will be pushing to ensure that that gets done in a timely manner.

I have raised in this Parliament that it is not just about school buildings but about the teaching that happens in those buildings, and we have seen the deficiency in terms of that teaching and the underfunded resourcing of schools that desperately needs to be tackled. Just on Caulfield South Primary School, because I made that part of my first adjournment in this chamber, we see a school at the moment that has an acting principal and that has a principal on stress leave. We have a board that has raised a whole lot of issues in that school that have not been resolved, and we have parents that are up in arms in terms of the safety and the financial activities that go on within that school. So can I say right up-front I look forward to those buildings and the \$11 million being spent on the upgrade of that school at Caulfield South, but I also look forward to seeing a new principal in that school in a timely manner and the quality of teaching restored in that school. In Caulfield Primary School, which we made a promise for, in Caulfield Junior College, which we made a promise towards, in Ripponlea Primary School – none of those schools received any funding. None of those schools received any support, except for Ripponlea Primary, which did have a ramp promised. But all of those schools need that support.

I was pleased to see that Gardenvale Primary School, which is in the electorate of my good friend the member for Brighton, did receive some upgraded funding, and the candidate for Caulfield rushed out and made that announcement outside of Caulfield in Gardenvale. I think for a brief moment he forgot where the boundaries were, but that did ensure, with the years of advocacy that I know the member for Brighton has been pushing for that upgrade, that we have made that happen and the Gardenvale Primary School will receive that upgrade.

It is not just about education. We have heard in this Parliament, and we have heard certainly during the lead-up in opposition, talk about the health crisis that we all face. This government will lead you to believe that it is all about the pandemic and nothing else. The pandemic has highlighted the deficiencies in our health system. The Premier, Daniel Andrews, shut down Victoria, locked down Victoria, longer than any other place in the world, and part of the reason for doing that was to get our health system right so that when we did open up we would not have the crisis that we now have. So he messed it up big time, and Victorians are still feeling the pain because of an incompetent government. Having a thousand people on a waiting list is just simply not good enough. We made a commitment as an opposition that we would halve the waiting list and we would hold the government to account to get that waiting list down, to get patient care, to get ambulances in a timely manner so they are not being ramped, to get our hospital system working again and to get people able to see a doctor. Health is an absolutely key responsibility of any government, and this government has failed at every turn.

Locally, we promised a new hospital at Caulfield, \$500 million. I am going to keep pushing for that at each and every opportunity, because we have a hospital there that, again, was built during wartime to repatriate 18,000 soldiers and, unfortunately, has hardly had a dollar spent on it, and we have seen some of the basic hydrotherapy pools and the like shut for years because the government has not funded basic maintenance and upgrades of that hospital. It is in desperate need of repair. It is the kind of hospital that could do a whole lot of allied health and other services and really pick up the slack for Victoria, and we are going to push the government on doing that.

Can I also just say more particularly and more generally that we see this government that has come in thinking to themselves: how good are we? They are skiting, they are arrogant, they are back to their usual selves, but I have got to say that this government did not win an election without second preferences.

This is a second-preference government – that is all it is. They are a second-preference government for their mates, the Greens – because that is why they are here – and again some of the independents that they had. That is why they are here. This is the lowest primary vote that Labor has had since 2014. I am absolutely happy to call out the fact that we on our side, and the Liberal Party, have got work to do, and we will do that each and every day to ensure that we are listening to Victorians and that we are relevant to the needs of each and every Victorian and we are delivering for each and every Victorian, no matter who they are and no matter where they live. I compare and contrast that to the Labor Party, who only care about their mates. They divide and conquer, and they are all about self-interest.

There is no room for being arrogant. Victorians have had enough, quite frankly, of both major political parties, and it is time for change. If this government wants to keep on being arrogant, this government will learn pretty quickly that Victorians have had enough, and we saw that on many, many different occasions. We have seen Victorians being absolutely wrecked. We have seen small businesses being absolutely wrecked – shut down. Go to Melbourne's CBD; it still has not recovered – it is so far away. Go to have a look at regional Victoria – and we have seen some of our new members talk about regional Victoria – that was locked down. They still have not recovered. The arrogance, again, of the government – it is not prepared to listen about what it did to each and every Victorian.

Members interjecting.

David SOUTHWICK: I am happy for the government to interject. I am happy for this government to continue to be arrogant, because I am going to say that on our side of the house we will not be doing that. We will be listening. We will be standing up for each and every Victorian. We will be bringing into the chamber the issues that matter for each and every Victorian, and we will be relevant and we will be absolutely transparent. We will not have the integrity issues that go with this government time and time again. Let me say every person has their day, and ultimately this government will be found wanting for the arrogance, the corruption, the integrity issues, the spend and the blowouts – all of the things that this government has had.

In the address-in-reply to the Governor's speech one of the key issues that was not mentioned was debt. We have a state that is in massive debt and will continue to have debt rise. Victoria's debt will be and is the largest debt of any other state – New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania combined. That is something that was not in the Governor's speech and has not been in the government's narrative, because they do not want people to know that this debt will lead to continued cost-of-living pressures – housing affordability, people being able to put food on the table, people being able to pay their energy bills, all the issues that matter to Victorians – and that is what we care about. That is absolutely what we care about. This government talk the big game when they talk about caring and having a heart, but they have absolutely no care about what Victorians are dealing with right now. They are dealing with these issues each and every day. They are struggling to put food on the table each and every day. Big plans, no detail. We saw that with the SEC; there was no detail around any of that.

But what lengths will the government go to to try and scare, to cause fear, to do all kinds of things? We had the member for Bentleigh talk up all the things that he saw in terms of the campaign and how it was a tough campaign. I wish the member for Bentleigh had visited Caulfield and seen the truck spitting out all kinds of diesel fuels driving every day from 8 o'clock in the morning till 6 o'clock at night during my pre-poll, talking about that we were going to bring back fracking. I mean, for heaven's sake, what mistruths will this government tell? They will stop at nothing to say that we are going to frack the state again. The only fracking licences that have ever been awarded have been from the Labor Party, from the Labor government. The government turned around and said we are going to do this and we are the party that loves coal when we had such an ambitious renewable energy target and a very, very strong narrative around what we would do in terms of transitioning, including using gas as part of the transition, which Alan Finkel again has said is really, really important to ensure we get affordability and a sensible transition. We had a good narrative. The government is full of spin.

I want to come back to where I started, to thank the people of Caulfield. We ran a fantastic campaign, and I am very proud of it, because the Labor Party threw everything at it – a whole lot of promises, a whole lot of commitments. We had six out of seven candidates who had a Jewish background. We had particularly the Labor Party try and do everything and throw money at the Jewish community. I tell you what, that is fantastic, because what it shows me is that I have not been doing my work for 5 minutes but ever since I was elected: standing up for members of the Jewish community that have not had the support that they needed. It included things like funding for combating antisemitism and things like a Holocaust memorial in the city and Community Security Group funding. All of this is really important – the banning of the Nazi symbol as well, which the government followed up on. All of this stuff I am very proud of.

But can I also say that Caulfield – as important as the Jewish community is to it, and as somebody of Jewish faith who absolutely wears his faith on his heart and wears the community on his heart, as you in this chamber well know – is also bigger than just the Jewish community. That is what the Labor Party forgot when they did not go to Elsternwick and they did not talk to the broader community and when they did not look at the overdevelopment that is crowding many parts of Elsternwick and crowding many parts of our suburbs. They did not look at some of the issues in Glen Huntly in terms of some of the shopfronts and upgrades that are desperately needed in those areas. They did not listen, and I come back to where I started: this has to be a government for all people – not picking winners and losers, not trying to pick up a vote where they think it might work. Our community saw right through this government, right through them. Daniel Andrews and the Minister for Environment and Climate Action went down to Pawfield Park in Caulfield and they were heckled and booed in their first announcement about parks. I invite the minister for energy to come back to Caulfield, because she has been twice. When she comes back, the minister for energy can also deliver some money for the Caulfield Racecourse Reserve, because the Caulfield Racecourse Reserve, which was set up in terms of a trust, is almost bankrupt. If they do not get funding, as they were promised by this government, that trust will be bankrupt and there will be no money to even pay for the directors in the trust, let alone deliver the open space in the middle of the racecourse. The government talks a big game but it failed to deliver for the constituents and people in all electorates, including mine in Caulfield. They will be held to account. We do not pick winners and losers. We stand up for all people.

Again, the government turned up to a synagogue; the Premier turned up to a synagogue. He was heckled at that synagogue because of what he did leading up to it – again because of picking winners and picking losers; that is what it is. You do not buy votes, and I am very, very proud that I won Caulfield because I stuck up for all people in Caulfield – all constituents. When we had a teal run against us and when we had the Labor Party run hard, I was very, very proud that we won.

I will finish where I started: you are all welcome to Caulfield, especially the minister and the Premier, because we need to deliver important infrastructure, important spend and important community engagement. I welcome those ministers to join me. I will buy the food. You ensure you deliver the projects that are desperately needed in our great electorate of Caulfield.

Members applauded.

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (15:18): I am deeply grateful to the residents of Greenvale for the opportunity to represent them here and to contribute to this debate. I acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people, traditional owners of the land over which the district of Greenvale's boundaries have been drawn. I pay respect to their elders and to the continuous history and enduring presence of Indigenous people and culture throughout the 60 square kilometres of the electorate. The newly created district of Greenvale takes its name from the eponymous reservoir and suburb in Melbourne's north and includes other communities, such as Craigieburn, Roxburgh Park, Attwood, Westmeadows, Meadow Heights and the important industrial precinct of Somerton.

Prior to the advent of residential development in the 1980s, Greenvale was a rural farming area. Originally called Yuroke, the area became Greenvale in 1868 with the establishment of the first public

school and post office. In an instance of history repeating itself, most of the electorate was, until recently, contained within the Yuroke district and represented by the Minister for Community Sport and Minister for Suburban Development. Thank you, Minister, for your support and your outstanding advocacy for our community. Your legacy of delivery is evident everywhere you turn throughout the electorate, from new schools, more trains and better bus services to upgraded roads and fantastic new sporting and recreation facilities. Meadow Heights and parts of Roxburgh Park were formerly part of the Broadmeadows district, and I thank former member Frank McGuire for his passionate representation of those communities and for being so generous with his time and advice.

The new district is characterised by an extraordinary physical diversity. Thanks to the preservation of the natural environment in Woodlands Historic Park and the Sunbury green wedge, the electorate's west retains much of its original character despite the incremental outward growth of Melbourne and the nearby presence of our international airport. Waterways, including the Moonee Ponds, Yuroke, Aitken and Merri creeks, trace out Greenvale's borders, and at the district's heart lies Greenvale Reservoir, providing water to western Melbourne since the 1970s. Where there is water there is life, and while the reservoir feeds the taps of modern Melbourne, the creeks that ring Greenvale were important parts of the world's oldest living culture, rich in the plant and wildlife resources upon which Indigenous populations depended.

In preserved environments like Woodlands Park there is an abundance of evidence describing the life of Indigenous communities which moved through the area, from scarred trees to occupation sites. Across Greenvale Creek, in the east of Woodlands, is another site of profound importance for many Indigenous Victorians today, the Weeroona Aboriginal Cemetery. It is a beautiful and lightly wooded area where kangaroos graze amid the last resting places of local Indigenous people and those whose remains have finally been repatriated from museums around the world. It adds a particular poignancy to the term 'traditional ownership' and emphasises the enduring connection of Victoria's Indigenous people with the lands we all represent.

The varied physical environment of Greenvale, from the grasslands of the green wedge to the growing suburbs, whose streets emerge like etchings on a page week by week, is matched only by its richly diverse human geography. The communities that comprise the electorate are truly multicultural. Nearly 45 per cent of Greenvale's residents were born overseas, over 80 per cent profess a faith, and 60 per cent of the community speaks a language other than English at home. These are not abstract statistics; they explain the essence of our community in Greenvale, which reflects Victoria's broader multicultural tradition at its best.

I recently had the pleasure to see 147 local residents become Australian citizens, surrounded by proud family and friends. All were visibly enthused to formally join our country and to contribute their talents and their cultural inheritance, which will become part of our national story. For some who became citizens that day, the mere expression of often intertwined history, language, values, faith and identity once resulted in unjust repression and tyranny – the prompts for their journey to our country as refugees. The experiences that led them to join our nation give a particular salience to the principles that underpin debates in this place: our shared commitment to democracy; to the rule of law; to freedom of speech, religion and association; and to a society in which all people are equal and valued.

Witnessing the joy of families when they took their pledge of citizenship reminded me of the excitement I felt when I became an Australian with my family a quarter of a century ago. Then, as now, I am filled with gratitude to have become a Victorian and an Australian and for all of the opportunities being part of this state and this country has afforded me. I am also eternally grateful for the risks and sacrifices my parents made in bringing four children around the world and then adding one more for good measure. Thanks, Mum and Dad, for your constant support and love. Your commitment to justice and the demonstration of your principles through your contributions to public health and community in so many ways, especially to L'Arche and people with a disability, have inspired all of your children and shaped my commitment to public service.

Education and its enabling role in connecting people with jobs and opportunity has been core to my purpose in life and in each of the roles I held before coming to this place. I became a teacher because of my commitment to Victoria's public education system, the public good it represents and the broad benefits it delivers. I loved being in the classroom, learning from committed colleagues and contributing to the learning and growth of my students. Along the way I gained a much better understanding of relationships between government policy, frontline service delivery and socio-economic outcomes. I am so grateful for the generous and collegial support of many, including Jim, Rodney and Peter. It increased my impact with students, and I am delighted that one of them can be here today in his first week as a graduate doctor 10 years on.

I had the opportunity to become a teacher because of reforming Labor governments – in this place under Premier John Brumby and in Canberra, where then education minister and later Prime Minister Gillard gave expression to her vision of a country where every child could receive a great education. As a teacher in rural Victoria and part of a small community, I saw firsthand that talent and ability are not defined by postcode or geography but that opportunities to realise them too often could be. I am proud to be joining a government which has made it a central mission to confront that challenge. Tens of billions of dollars have helped build the Education State, not just through world-class infrastructure in every Victorian school but in growing the capacity of school leaders and teachers to focus on the interventions that yield the greatest impact with their students. Our investment in education is positioning Victoria for future success through its impact on workforce participation and the productivity of that workforce. These are the long-run generators of economic growth and higher living standards.

One of the great privileges of an election campaign is the chance to pitch up, unsolicited, to thousands of homes, to chat with residents about the issues of importance to them and to listen. Several issues were recurrent across Greenvale: schools, roads and jobs. Productivity reform is often perceived as an abstraction, but it is really about the improvements to services and infrastructure that people across Greenvale told me matter most to them – upgrading Mickleham Road so it can serve 21st century suburbs while saving time and lives; delivering this government's record investment in our schools so that every student, regardless of their background or the school their parents chose for them, receives great teaching in first-rate buildings, including at the new Greenvale Secondary College; working with business and enabling them to grow and create jobs while equipping Victorians with the skills and training they need to access those jobs and thrive at every stage of life. These are not arcane concepts; they matter enormously to people's lived experience of community, and they are part of this government's record of delivery. Incremental productivity improvements are key drivers of better living standards, and that is why I will work every day for the people of Greenvale to continue delivering the services and reforms that matter most to them.

The Andrews government's Education State reforms, including the introduction of free kinder, are not just about providing foundational building blocks upon which life chances can depend; they are transformational economic and productivity reforms. But this government also understands the importance of lifelong learning. Training and TAFE are the keys to stronger productivity, enablers of higher participation in the labour market and the basis of a fairer economy, which can deliver improved standards of living for the people we all represent. Across two parliaments and now into a third, the Andrews government has rebuilt TAFE as the engine of new jobs in our economy and contributed to a genuine parity of esteem within our tertiary system. Because of these reforms and our investment in productivity-enhancing infrastructure across our state, Victoria's prospects for growth are strong. The structural and technological changes which have driven growth in recent decades and which are likely to spur the next wave, however, leave some Victorians concerned the disruption associated with this change may not benefit them. That is why there is an economic and a moral imperative to this government's investment in TAFE and training.

What Schumpeter called 'creative destruction' does bring great reward for some and smaller gains for many, but the downside risks have too often not been shared equitably. As the economic history of

Melbourne's north shows, the effects of economic change, global integration and technological shifts include loss, uncertainty and trauma – not just cheaper consumer goods. In past decades those impacted by change too often experienced redundancy, leading to long-term unemployment with traumatic and scarring effects on people and their community. Support, upskilling and training were patchy at best, and comparable jobs were hard to come by. For those who found work, it may have been in service industries offering lower rates of pay with irregular hours and poorer conditions, contributing to structural increases in underemployment. Just pointing to headline increases in growth or even per capita improvements in income and purchasing power does not mean much to households that lose livelihoods, opportunities and futures as part of a transition. A Rawlsian veil of ignorance informs our perspective on managing catastrophic harm in other realms and led to Labor's creation of large risk-pooling mechanisms, including our social security system, Medicare and the NDIS. Yet when it comes to damage wrought on families and communities by structural forces over which they have got no control, it can be met with a shrug of the shoulders or an odd sense that nothing should interfere with the vagaries of a market that will sort the so-called lifters from the leaners.

Instead, as a social democrat I believe it is a role of government to help smooth risk and protect individuals from the buffeting impacts of structural change. I believe in the power of markets to increase living standards and prosperity, but for markets to deliver optimal outcomes for citizens and society they must be functioning, fair and effectively regulated. The untrammelled market does not magically provide skills and capabilities. A belief in a better approach – one that values individuals, invests in communities and provides them with the opportunities they need to thrive across their lives – is why I am proud to be a member of the Australian Labor Party, humbled to be part of this government and part of this caucus, and honoured to represent the people of Greenvale, for whom I will work every day to deliver those opportunities.

To Ella and the magnificent Greenvale campaign team: thank you for your unstinting hard work and logistical brilliance and for being with me on doorsteps in all weather. I am so glad so many of you can be here today. Thank you to the literally hundreds of volunteers and local Labor members who supported our Greenvale campaign and helped me speak with voters across pre-poll and on election day. You are Labor's heart, and I deeply appreciate your solidarity – not just with me but, much more importantly, with our collective movement and the values we hold. I am grateful beyond words.

Thank you to Liam Moloney, Jack, Tilly, Liam Hickey, Hannah, Mark, Alice, Dan, Sean, Tom, Seamus, Yannick, Daniel, the O'Kane clan and all the friends who have always been there to challenge, spar and generally support. To family here, around Australia and overseas, and to the beloved members who have left us: I love our idiosyncratic team, the connections we forged with this country and the close bonds we share with each other. Thank you Catryn and Peter, Tomos and Kate, Megan and Justin, David, all of my wonderful nieces and nephews, and Ann, Rob, Pat and Jill.

I am grateful to the mighty labour movement for its support and its tireless effort to ensure a fair deal and a just economy that delivers for all. Thank you in particular to Michael Donovan, state secretary of the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association, assistant state secretary to the SDA Mauro Moretta, Dean D'Angelo and all of the trade unionists who work hard to secure fair pay and conditions for the essential workers in retail and distribution, who keep our economy moving and society fed and clothed – so many of whom live and work in Greenvale and across Melbourne's north.

Thank you to my caucus colleagues, and especially my northern Labor neighbours in this house and Sheena Watt in the other place, for your collegiality and shared commitment to our region. Thanks to Maria Vamvakinou, who represents us in Canberra with vigour, passion and a deep knowledge of community. Thank you to both the Deputy Leader of the Government in the other place and the Minister for Corrections; your commitment to Labor values and impactful policy reforms is inspiring. Thank you to my federal Labor colleague Daniel Mulino. I have learned so much from your dedicated and principled public service, intelligence and policy rigour. I am also grateful for the counsel and friendship of Hasan Erdogan, Chris Campbell and Debbie Dalmau.

Finally, and not lastly, thank you Row for your love, partnership and endless support and for accommodating the many extra challenges that I manage to create for our shared life with incredible forbearance. The commitment you have to your patients at the Royal Children's and Peter Mac and their families is astonishing and inspiring. So too is your ceaseless love and care for your own family and friends. The most meaningful undertaking I could ever give to my constituents is to seek to work as hard as you do and with as much care, empathy and grace. Thanks, too, for saying yes. I love you and respect you, and I am excited about the future. I thank the house.

Members applauded.

David HODGETT (Croydon) (15:37): Thank you, Speaker, and congratulations on your elevation to high office. I look forward to you presiding over this chamber, which is code for 'Kick me out last in question time'. Can I welcome new members to this place from all parties and from both sides of the house. Congratulations on your election. I encourage you not to waste a minute of your time as an MP, and I wish you well in your service. This is not my inaugural speech; it is the fifth time I have contributed to address-in-reply motions, having been elected in the 56th Parliament and now serving in the 60th Parliament. I wanted to commence by actually doing my thankyous and commence by thanking the people of the electorate of Croydon for showing their faith and confidence in returning me to this place. I never take my seat for granted, and I will continue to work hard on behalf of the people of Croydon to deliver changes, improvements and a better community in which we live, work and enjoy. As I said, I will continue with my thankyous and then I will turn my attention to some of the things that I will be working hard on and advocating for in my electorate, which I will try to achieve over the next four years.

Can I start by thanking all those involved in my re-election campaign. Election campaigns, as we all know, are an enormous logistical exercise, with much planning, organising, hard work and allocation and management of tasks. No one person can do it alone, and I cannot thank my team enough for their support, assistance, encouragement, advice and participation in on-the-ground activities in the lead-up to the election and on election day. I wish to express my gratitude and thanks to my campaign team, who met many times to coordinate and plan campaign activities and organise the resources required to put us in the best position to win the seat of Croydon. This campaign by far was the best we have run. We raised the necessary financial resources to give us flexibility and options with our campaign activities. We had the best signage program we have ever run. We rolled out a very good mail program. Our digital presence was second to none. We engaged radio and cinema advertising and hired a mobile billboard in the final week of the campaign. Our community engagement through doorknocking, our listening posts and local festivals and events was first class. I am pleased and proud of the campaign we ran, and I put on record my sincere thanks for the hard work, dedication and efforts of the campaign team.

I also wish to acknowledge and recognise the incredible work of all those volunteers who assisted in handing out how-to-vote cards at the two early voting centres and at the polling booths on election day. Staffing the pre-poll centres, two on this occasion, for the two weeks prior to election day and ensuring they run smoothly is a monumental exercise, and I cannot thank enough everyone involved in my campaign for the time they gave standing in the rain, the hail, the wind and the sunshine from morning to night to make sure that every person that entered to vote was given the option of a 'David Hodgett, Liberal for Croydon' how-to-vote card. Without their assistance and help, we would never be able to put ourselves into a winning position, so I thank all of you who gave your time so generously over those two weeks of the pre-poll. To the many people who assisted me with our doorknocking program, our listening posts and at shopping centres, street corners, railway stations and local festivals and events, having a strong presence at these community engagements and events showed we were strong and keen, wanted to win this election and were putting in the hard work required to get the result we were working towards, so thank you to everyone who assisted and invested their time in these important activities.

To my staff, I am grateful for the energy, the drive, the dedication, the professionalism and the commitment that they have all shown over the journey in the electorate office. The number of times

at pre-poll or indeed on election day that someone stopped me to make a comment on how they were assisted by my staff and gave an account of the positive experience they received from my staff at the office made me proud of your efforts, and you no doubt put me in a positive light with many in the local community. So thank you for your ongoing support, assistance, enthusiasm and loyalty.

To my family, I thank them for their support and encouragement, backing, kindness and belief in allowing me to pursue what I love doing: representing our local area in the Parliament of Victoria. As many of us say in this place, and as I have said before, I am a volunteer for my role but my family are conscripts, so I place on record my love, thanks and appreciation for all that you do to support me in my role as a member of Parliament. And to each and every volunteer, to everyone who assisted, everyone that gave their time and helped me with this election campaign, I thank you and I am truly grateful for your support and friendship.

I wanted to use the balance of my time to talk about a number of things that we advocated for in the lead-up to the election for Croydon. Just because you advocate for them in the lead-up to the election, it does not mean that they are not required, whether you have the opportunity or are fortunate enough to form government or not, and I will continue to invest my time in this place in working cooperatively and constructively with the government and with ministers to try and get some of these projects delivered in our local community.

There were a number of sporting commitments, one being the revamping of Glen Park for the Bayswater North community. They required \$1.5 million towards improvements at Glen Park, Bayswater North, including an upgrade to the lighting system and improving the facilities for residents over in Bayswater North. We know that for welcoming outdoor spaces for locals, from dog walkers to aspiring footy players, we need to invest in those sorts of facilities, and delivering an upgraded lighting system will mean local clubs like the East Ringwood Junior Football Club and the South Croydon Cricket Club can expand their training and competition hours into the evening and grow their player bases. The park is a wonderful community asset, and I will be, as I say, working to advocate to the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events or indeed the Minister for Community Sport to try and get the funding to deliver that upgrade.

Likewise for East Croydon Kilsyth Tennis Club. The club has nearly 200 members of all ages, abilities and diverse backgrounds. They serve as an important part of the community. There are 250 kids competing in development and coaching programs every week, and an additional 12 adult and seven junior teams. They were after about \$365,000 to upgrade facilities at the club, including converting two of the existing en-tout-cas courts across to synthetic courts, two new additional synthetic courts on top of that to be built to keep up with the growing membership, and the upgrading of existing lighting to cost-efficient LED.

Eastfield Eagles – that is a BMX track. There are plenty of sports that, with all due respect to them, are not often thought of as mainstream sports like your crickets, netballs, footies and those sorts of things. The Eastfield BMX Club is an important club in our local electorate. They are just after \$40,000 for a new starting gate. They have 55 members across all ages. They have 60 per cent of members who are under 12. The club has strong female membership. I will be advocating that it is important to continue to invest in grassroots sporting clubs like the Eastfield Eagles. It in fact has produced a Commonwealth Games participant and Olympian in those sports.

The Mooroolbark Heights Reserve clubrooms were constructed in 1970. They are used by both Mooroolbark football and cricket club and desperately need an investment of some \$2.5 million. I will be working with both our federal counterparts and the state government to try and secure that funding so that we can build brand new, fully accessible facilities, including men's, women's and umpires' change rooms, game-day toilets and a multi-use community social space. Women do not have access to the change rooms within the current building, so they have to go to a temporary offsite building, which is just not acceptable in this day and age. If the men's team is playing, the women have to

change separately over there. This investment is, again, an investment in grassroots sports and would provide local residents and families with facilities that they are proud of.

There were a number of community groups that we supported that, like all of us, have groups that carry out much-needed work in our communities. The Chin community – we will be seeking additional funding for them to continue with their festivals and events. I note that during the Australia Day celebrations this year the Chin National Day festival was awarded Community Event of the Year by the Maroondah City Council at their Australia Day awards. I congratulate them for that award. We would be encouraging the government to continue to invest in those festivals and events. Also, the Karen community has a huge presence in my community. They have been part of the community since 2006 and have grown from two Karen families to more than 400 families in the Maroondah area. They also need investment and funding to allow the community to hold cultural events in order to help re-engage their younger members, who often feel disconnected, particularly after the COVID lockdowns.

Many might have heard of SALT – Sport and Life Training. It is a terrific program that is run by David Burt and his team at SALT. They are after significant funding to allow them to continue their work. They provide local communities and clubs with programs for those that are struggling under mental health and wellbeing pressures and give them the long-term support they need. They are into suicide prevention and support for mental health. They go throughout Victoria, running these programs, to all clubs and all sports – males and females, all ages. Again, I will be continuing to advocate on behalf of SALT – David Burt and his team – to get some funding there.

There is the Dining Room Mission in Croydon. They are only after \$25,000 to help them continue. They provide ongoing support to the most vulnerable people in and around the Croydon area. People travel on a Tuesday night to the Dining Room. Sometimes that is the only hot meal they get that day. With a small amount of money, they could continue to provide those much-needed services. Similarly, the Babes Project provide support programs, helping women who face a crisis pregnancy by providing them with prenatal parenting information, first-aid classes, cooking and nutrition classes, budgeting classes, and helping them to gain practical knowledge about childbirth and parenting. Without funding they are at the risk of closing. They have a presence in both Croydon and Frankston and provide much-needed services that are not provided by other organisations.

Elisha Care perform some terrific work. Geoff Marsh has himself gone through a recovery journey and built his not-for-profit organisation, Elisha Care, into a truly meaningful organisation. They deserve funding to continue their amazing work. They service the local area – not just Croydon but surrounding areas – offering rehabilitation services for those impacted by drug and alcohol addiction and providing transitional housing, employment pathways and regular catch-ups. Again, I will be working with the government to try and get them supported so they can continue the terrific work that they do in and around the area.

ADRA Community Care Croydon, similarly, is after small amounts of money. ADRA delivers a wide range of critical supports for vulnerable and socially isolated members of the community, including a successful food program. Each Thursday their Vive cafe serves approximately 100 free healthy three-course meals, and they also give out about 3500 food hampers to families in need each year, providing education, nutrition et cetera. Again, they are worthy of support, but they desperately need that support to continue those services.

Hope City Mission is another one we supported by calling for funding. Hope City Mission was established in 2004. It provides a safe space for those experiencing financial hardship to receive support and education about managing their situation as well as offering a range of additional services, including Foodbank, to get them back on their feet. Hope City Mission were looking at funding to upgrade a learning portal, and I will continue to work on that for them. Yarrunga Community Centre were after an elevated balcony. It is a community centre that offers health and wellbeing programs – a whole range of programs – which is a great asset for the local community. They really benefit from the Yarrunga Community Centre, who provide significant programs to all members of the community.

Then schools: Yarra Road Primary School – they have got several portable classrooms at Yarra Road in desperate need of replacement with a more permanent structure, so I would be inviting the minister to come out and visit the school there and look at those needs; St Peter Julian Eymard, of the Catholic Church, is after funding, and I will look to secure some funding from that block funding that was given to the non-government schools; and Melba College. I am pleased to say that we went out and announced the stage 3 funding that they have been after for quite some time. That was matched by the government, the only thing in my electorate that was, so I am pleased that they are actually going to get that delivered and be able to finish the school off. No school wants to be held in limbo and get two-thirds done, or two stages done and not the third. So they can finally get that finished off.

Funding to back Mooroolbark and Croydon shopping strips – again, they have gone through a difficult time over the COVID years. They seek funding to invest in their streetscapes with Yarra Ranges and Maroondah; we will continue that fight. It is not in my electorate but certainly my electorate benefits from the announcement for Maroondah Hospital – one that we announced, and then the government hastily went out and announced the next day. So I will be looking forward to seeing that delivered. That provides much-needed healthcare services to all of our local community.

I am glad to be back. I thank again the people of Croydon for having the confidence and faith in me, and I will continue to work hard on all those needs for the local community.

Members applauded.

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (15:52): I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet here at Parliament House and in my electorate of Pakenham, the Wurundjeri and Bunurong people of the Kulin nation, and pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging. As I look around I feel the full significance of being here in this place on a site where traditional owners once gathered – high overlooking the Yarra – and a meeting place for the Kulin for tens of thousands of years. This is also a place where many men and women have been before me. I am humbled and honoured to represent my community alongside you all today as the first female and the first ALP member to represent the seat called Pakenham.

The people of the Pakenham district have given me this privilege to represent them here in Spring Street and to be a voice on their behalf. It is an honour, and one I do not take lightly. My electorate is made up of Pakenham, Pakenham South, Pakenham Upper, Officer, Officer South, Rythdale, Dewhurst and parts of Upper Beaconsfield, Nar Nar Goon North and Cardinia. It is a diverse area made up of a growth corridor and surrounded with semi-rural and rural properties on the edges – some on the flat, some in the hills – a varied and beautiful landscape and an even better mix of people. Our community is as diverse as our terrain – home to families with deep roots, tracing their connection all the way back to when Pakenham was largely just a pub and a post office. And then there are those who have chosen to make it their own – families who have come from countries all over the world looking for a new start and a brighter future for themselves and their children.

My family is one of them. We moved from the UK when I was 18 months old. My father, Ivan, was born in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, a small island in the Caribbean. He lived in a one-bedroom mudbrick house, which was not an easy feat for my grandparents and their 12 children. His family moved to England, also looking for opportunities, and at age 13 this became his new home. He later married my mother, Pat. They had my big sister Ceri and I before deciding to move to Australia, where they hoped to find a better education system and more opportunities, particularly for their daughters.

Like generations of migrants to Australia, our first home was a migrant centre in Springvale. Later we moved to Frankston, and to put it plainly, there is no avoiding politics when you grow up living next door to future federal MP and Minister Alan Griffin. Mum struggled with a back injury, which meant my father was the sole breadwinner, working long hours as a mechanic to support his family. During this time Alan's parents, Marj and Alby, did lots to help with my sister and me, so much so that we adopted them as our Australian grandparents. Once she recovered from her injury, my Mum trained

to be a secretary, and after she qualified she went to work for the late Jane Hill MP, member for Frankston North. Jane was an inspiration to me, even at that young age. I will never forget coming to this very place in the late 1980s. I could not have been more ecstatic: dining in Strangers and looking up to this trailblazing woman who was so passionate about her community. I remember Daryl Somers from *Hey Hey It's Saturday* was there too. It was an exciting evening for a girl in the 1980s.

Following Alan's election to federal Parliament, Mum went to work for Alan in his electorate office as his office manager, managing people like our Premier, Gabrielle Williams, Lee Tarlamis, Julian Hill, Juliana Addison, Mat Hilakari and former member for Altona Jill Hennessy, just to name a few. My sister and I often spent our school holidays in the office and helped in almost every state and federal election from a young age. I remember going to watch Alan's maiden speech in Canberra and the excitement of joining the ALP when I turned 16. Mum knew I loved the ALP, but she did think it was odd that I had posters of Bob Hawke on my bedroom wall.

Whilst I was proud of the Labor movement, I had never had a lifelong ambition to run for Parliament. I watched people like Jane Hill, Alan Griffin, Jill Hennessy, Gavin Jennings and of course our greatest Premier, Daniel Andrews – maybe I am a little bit biased – and was proud of everything they achieved for our country and our state. But ultimately what motivated me to put my hand up was experiencing firsthand what it means to make a difference. Before coming to this place I worked in various jobs: retail, administration, as a vet nurse and also as an electorate officer. Working as an electorate officer gave me an up-close understanding of what good governments can do to help people – people living their everyday lives, many who have never reached out to their local member of Parliament before but who need help and who are often at their lowest moments. It is an experience that has shaped me and given me the drive to put up my hand so I too can be that voice for my community. May I take this opportunity to thank people like Barb and Helen, among many other colleagues, who have taught me what it is to serve your community. And to my own electorate staff: I know how hard you work – I have been there before – and I appreciate your dedication.

When I think about what this government has already achieved for my electorate locally, I am proud – things like new schools for our growing area, level crossing removals, new train stations on the way, a new community hospital, just to name a few. I am proud that we have promised Pakenham Secondary College a well-deserved upgrade, and a special mention to Jordan Crugnale for also being so passionate about this one. I am even more proud to see what this government has achieved for this state: the voluntary assisted dying reforms, firefighter presumptive cancer laws, progress towards treaty with our First Peoples and of course our commitment to bring back the SEC.

The work of government is by its nature deeply personal. It is why I would like to make mention of a number of policies that mean a lot to me and the people that I love. In 2016 I suffered a significant stroke. At the age of 36 it was a huge shock. I did eight months of rehabilitation to learn to walk, talk, eat and drive again. Our incredible healthcare workers were the key to my recovery, as was the incredible support of my family and friends. I am proud this government has backed health and healthcare workers, including funding a second stroke ambulance in the south-east, but there is always more to be done. Stroke awareness and the support and care needed for rehabilitation require and deserve our ongoing focus. It is an issue I am very passionate about and will be a fierce advocate for.

Another thing I am passionate about is the government's commitment to the prevention of family violence. My sister and my five beautiful nephews, who are here today, have been the victims of family violence. I would like to thank them for allowing me to share their experience. To be so close to this kind of violence gives a real insight into the pain and suffering it causes families for life. Family violence is not okay. It is prevalent in far too many families, and it is debilitating to not only victims but communities as a whole. There is far more work to do, but the royal commission was an important start. I am grateful to have been at the opening of the Orange Door last year in Pakenham and wish to thank all our support workers and police, who do the toughest of jobs. My message to victim-survivors is: this government hears you, I hear you, and I will continue to be a voice for you here in this place.

Finally, our support for people who make our communities strong. I joined the Upper Beaconsfield fire brigade as a volunteer in 2014, and they have been like a second family to me. I have held the roles of community safety coordinator and lieutenant and have the privilege of serving not only our community but also others in need. Deployments with my Cardinia group brigades, fighting both fires interstate and campaign fires in Bunyip and East Gippsland, were very tough but also very rewarding. All the men and women from my local brigade are selfless and dedicated to our local community. One of them, though, deserves a special mention. She is a woman who I have always admired, a woman who is two weeks shy of 95 and is still active in non-operational duties, a woman we can all aspire to be like – a humble, quietly spoken woman who works hard for her community and never seeks or expects acknowledgement. Surprise, surprise, she is also a woman who wishes not to be named here today. It is a privilege to recognise her contributions in this place.

Volunteers are the backbone of every community, and the Pakenham district is no different. Our CFA, SES, multicultural and multifaith groups, sports clubs, seniors clubs and youth groups are among many. Our Sikh community, for example, go above and beyond not only in times of crisis but regularly, offering support to many in our area. I am deeply grateful to all the volunteers not only in the Pakenham electorate but across our great state, and it is to them I offer my first thankyou. Thank you for the difference you make each and every day.

I would also like to thank Alan Griffin, who gave me that first opportunity to learn, a man who has been someone I have looked up to from an early age. Julian Hill, Lee Tarlamis, Pauline Richards and Ray De Witt have also been instrumental in my growth into this role and have supported me throughout this journey. Ray has been my mentor for decades – a man we call family. The time, advice and support you have shown me from an early age I can never thank you enough for.

During my campaign I worked hard, almost as hard as my campaign manager Harriet Leadbetter and my number one volunteer Lachlan Duncan, both of whom I am very grateful for. He never complained and only fell asleep a couple of times. During the latter stages of the campaign, I had what I called ‘Team Harriet’; I had both Harriet Leadbetter and Harriet Shing encouraging me to work a little bit harder, a little bit harder, a little bit harder. I love my Team Harriet, but gee, they were persistent. Pakenham was a close seat – in fact it was very close, so I am lucky I had them to push me. Harriets – plural – I love you both and sincerely appreciate your friendship and guidance. Harriet Shing, I sincerely thank you for all your wisdom and ongoing support. You mean the world to me. Speaking of close results, this is a good time to thank all my scrutineers, particularly Kitty and the eagle-eyed Dilhan. I would like to acknowledge the other candidates that worked so hard.

During the campaign it was such an experience to meet so many people and attend so many events where I learned so much. I met people from all walks of life and of all different ages and attended ceremonies and tasted food I had never had the pleasure of knowing. I gained friends that I will have for life and will be forever grateful for the encounters. It is an experience I will never forget.

Obviously a campaign is not just a small group of volunteers – I had so many I could not possibly name them all, but my father-in-law Charlie letterboxed almost the entire electorate more than once. And thank you to Frances, Kelly, Eamon, Simon, Jan, Abi, Sue, John, Nissar and my Afghan crew and of course my friend for decades Rahimi – the list goes on. Thank you to each and every one of you who came to help, attended a fundraiser or gave moral support.

Another woman worthy of a mention is Mandy Ramshaw, my godmother from the UK. When I called her during the last six weeks to ask if she would come and help me during the busiest time of my life, she came. Amongst other things, she made sure I ate food every day. It is a job anyone who has ever been on the campaign trail appreciates deeply, and I am so grateful you could extend your trip to be here today.

I know I have big shoes to fill. Jordan Crugnale, the member for Bass, has done an incredible job for the parts of Pakenham she represented under the previous electorate boundaries. She is well loved by

the community, and I am reminded of this regularly. I am so grateful to have you as a friend and mentor and appreciate all you have done to guide me. Brad Battin, member for Berwick, I would also like to thank you for previously representing the other part of now Pakenham electorate. Although we often have differing views on many things, I do appreciate the mutual respect and friendship we have had for many years, and thank you for your service to the community.

We have great people at Victorian Labor and EMILY's List, and I am grateful to all of you. I am sorry if I drove you insane. Kat Hardy, Mat Hilakari and the Socialist Left, thank you for your friendship and support for many, many years. There are so many people to thank and so little time. To my fellow members from all sides of the house and to our incredible parliamentary staff, who assist us no end, I want to say thank you. The kindness and knowledge from everyone are greatly appreciated.

The future of Pakenham is bright, and I will work hard to ensure we keep up with the services and infrastructure we need as we grow. There is a lot happening for our local area: new roads, new schools, removal of level crossings, creating new local jobs, and the investment we have seen is creating a better future with even more to come. Once again to the people of Pakenham district, thank you. I hope I do you proud, fight when I need to fight and be there to listen always. I am grateful for this opportunity, and I will work hard each and every day.

Lastly, my family. My parents, Mum and Dad, I am so lucky to have you both as role models. My dad has been one of my biggest fans, and I could see the pride in his chest from the beginning of this journey. My mum, I have always adored you, as do many others, including in this room. You are the person I call almost every morning, someone I can cry to and whinge to, and you always love me and are there to listen. I love you both so much. My dear big sister Ceri and my very handsome and funny nephews Kelsey, Cy, Taues, Vah and TK, a strong, close-knit family led by my very passionate and extraordinary sister, I love you all. To my ex-husband Dragan, whom I am so grateful for, you are the best father any child could have. I appreciate everything you do for me and the support and strength that you give to me, Matt, Mum, the kids and even Maisie the dog. I sincerely thank you. My dear partner Matt, the smartest and calmest person I know, I could not do life without you. If the internet ever goes down, you are my Google. You do so much for me and the children, and you are a wealth of knowledge and my best friend. Thank you. I love you. Also thank you to Gavin and Margaret for being here today.

I have saved the very, very best for last: my incredible, intelligent, kind, magnificent children Sienna and Sage, and I left you both until the end in the hope I could hold back the tears. You two are my everything. You have sacrificed so much during the last 12 months to let me be here. You were there to encourage me when I was scared. You never doubted once that I would make it here today, even if I and others did. I am going to miss you when you take your adventures to the west coast of Australia with Dad, but I do hope you learn and savour this once-in-a-lifetime experience. I will be here waiting for you and looking forward to the updates along the way. I love you both more than you can possibly imagine.

Members applauded.

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (16:13): I am grateful also to contribute to the address-in-reply. At the start of my second term I fully expect that my contribution to the address-in-reply will not have as much fanfare, celebration and audience as those members making their inaugural speeches, but at the start of a second term there are still important things to say. I do want to congratulate those colleagues across the aisle who are making their inaugural speeches during the course of these weeks. It is a defining moment in your entry to public life. It is an opportunity to talk not just about your own story, your reason for being and reason for acting, but also your vision for a better community and a better Victoria. I wish those who make their speeches all the very best in the coming days and coming weeks.

I want to use this opportunity to address a couple of things. I think, far too often thanks are left for the end, but I wanted to commence by thanking all of those people who contributed to a successful campaign in the Sandringham district during the 2022 election. Those of you who operate in this

chamber, who are members of this chamber, will know that the thing that motivates and drives me – those in my community who know me will know the things that motivate and drive me – is just a good outcome. It is a good community benefit. It is to better a community, to improve a community. Seldom do I make things political, because frankly I think politics for the sake of politics simply leads to more politics and is unproductive.

It is in that spirit that I wish to thank a number of people – firstly the some 46,000 electors of the Sandringham district. I was quietly pleased, humbled, by the support that our campaign received in the Sandringham district. The swing towards me and the party I represent, the Liberal Party, was around 5 per cent. In the course of the 2022 election, that is a reasonable achievement. I would like to thank my electorate chair Jennifer O'Brien and my electorate executive, the former member for Sandringham Murray Thompson. I would like to thank those community leaders who saw that my purpose was not political but to do everything I could to advocate to the government, to fight for good ideas and to fight for good outcomes. To all those community members from cricket club presidents, soccer club presidents, footy club presidents, school principals, community leaders right across the Sandringham district too numerous to name, I am grateful for their collaboration and for their recognition that my purpose was for the betterment of our community.

I would also like to thank my family: my wife Kate and my children Abigail and Charles. Abby was here earlier today for a portion of the day and enjoys coming with her daddy to work. Perhaps conscripts to the cause at some time, but I seriously could not do it without them. Their sacrifice is something which I am not sure I will ever be able to repay, so I think that is important to mention too.

I think that there was huge support in the Sandringham district for the campaign that we ran, because it was a comprehensive campaign with a comprehensive plan for our community. There were commitments made and recognition given to the needs of our community across a number of different areas – firstly, our Sandringham Hospital. Those members who have been here for some time will know that I was born in Sandringham Hospital, so I declare that interest up-front. But it is the caring heart of our community; it really is. It is part of Alfred Health, and my concern is that as it is part of a larger health system and the needs of the Prahran campus of the Alfred are so great, Sandringham Hospital may very well get forgotten in that equation. So I see this as an opportunity for me as the local member to advocate for the needs of Sandringham Hospital. I am grateful not only to those community members who work at the hospital, volunteer at the hospital, raise money for the hospital and are also patients at the hospital but to the professional staff of the hospital as well. My commitment for a \$25 million investment in the Sandringham Hospital would have gone a long way. I will declare my cards now: I will continue to advocate for the needs of Sandringham Hospital in this term of Parliament. It is not just the right thing to do, but people would expect me to do that not only in this place but in our community as well. I will continue to do that. I look forward to an ongoing fruitful conversation with those at Alfred Health in relation to the needs of the Sandringham Hospital.

Of course it was the Liberal–Nationals who first committed to removing the level crossings at both Highett Road and Wickham Road, and that was after an almost five-year campaign, a community campaign, where we sought to engage not only community members in and around Highett but also Highett businesses and local government as well, both the Bayside council and the Kingston council. My strong preference, as expressed in that announcement, was for rail under road. I think sky rail, which is the government's plan, at the Highett Road and Wickham Road level crossings will divide our community. I dare say that that is the view of the large majority of our community as well. My preference, our community's preference, is for rail under road. I received an email about that matter just a few hours ago.

When the government announced that they were ridding the Frankston line of every level crossing, perhaps what was not as clear from that headline was the fact that the government decided to not remove but close the Latrobe Street level crossing, which is between Mentone and Cheltenham stations. Now, there is an issue with that, the issue being that if you close that crossing it forces more traffic to busy Mentone and busy Cheltenham. My commitment ahead of the last election was to keep

the Latrobe Street crossing open. You see, I just do not think that the government decision-making on this particular matter – made, I dare say, far removed from the reality of my community – understands deeply the circumstance of my community.

When the government made that announcement I went to the community; I surveyed 1500 households. Of the 400 or so responses that I got within a week, some 98 per cent of respondents said that they were not asked by the government about their view on this matter before the government made an announcement, and close to 90 per cent of those respondents said they wanted that level crossing left open – and for very good reason. Within a short period of time after that announcement I went to my community, I asked my community what their view was, I formulated a view and I formulated a response and a commitment that we would keep that level crossing open.

Now, in a recent adjournment matter I raised this for the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, the Honourable Jacinta Allan, and in her response she said to me that the government is at the early planning stage of the closure of the Latrobe Street crossing and the removal of the Highett Road and Wickham Road level crossings. That to me means that there is opportunity. There is opportunity for the government to not only hear but deeply listen to the needs of my community – at Latrobe Street to keep that level crossing open and at Highett Road and Wickham Road for there to be a rail-under-road solution at both of those level crossings – and I will be campaigning for that end.

I was the only candidate in my district to advocate for the needs of Sandringham College. Ten million dollars is being committed to Sandringham College for stage 1 of their redevelopments. Sandringham College is over two campuses. Ten million dollars, frankly, in this world does not buy you much. To effectively rebuild both campuses the price tag is closer to \$40 million or \$50 million. Now, that first \$10 million commitment for stage 1 was made a couple of budgets ago, and a commitment was given by the former education minister and the former member for Monbulk when he visited the school that once one funding envelope of \$10 million was made, once that commitment was made, more would be coming. Well, we are a couple of budgets on, and that commitment has not been made.

I was disappointed that during the course of the election the Labor government did not commit the second lot of \$10 million to Sandringham College, because what they effectively said to the Sandringham College community was during the term of this Parliament there is not the second stage funding for that school. As we know, when we make commitments during the courses of election campaigns they do not need to be delivered in the first year of government; they could be delivered in the second, the third or the fourth year of government. The needs of Sandringham College are great. I mean, by some measure the place is crumbling down around the kids. The teaching and learning are fantastic. It is great. The culture of the staff is great. The educational leadership of the principal and the leadership team at Sandringham College is impressive. But the buildings do not match what they seek to achieve, and that must be addressed.

Of course I made commitments also to Beaumaris North Primary School, Beaumaris Primary School, Stella Maris Primary School and Sacred Heart Primary School, and those are all very important commitments as well. I will continue to advocate for the needs of those primary schools during the course of this term. We made a commitment to upgrade the Trevor Barker Beach Oval to improve change room facilities and to cater for women's and girls football there. We made a commitment to reinstate neighbourhood residential zones to give clarity for development within the Bayside and Kingston municipalities – two dwellings maximum on a title site and a mandatory height limit of 8 metres or two storeys.

We made a commitment to preserving the vast majority of the Gas and Fuel land, 6.3 hectares of land on Nepean Highway in Highett, and we also made a commitment to better protecting our area's greatest environmental and ecological asset, in the Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary. These were just some of the commitments that we made during the course of the election campaign, and as I said earlier, I am certain that the result that was delivered to me and to the Liberal Party in the Sandringham district was as a result of the work that was undertaken not just in the last 12 months and not just in

the last four weeks of an election year but over the four-year term: to engage with community members on issues that were important to them, to advocate for them and to fight for them, for their needs, for their interests and for a better community.

Since the election has taken place, the newly elected Leader of the Opposition, the member for Hawthorn, has asked me to step up and into a shadow cabinet role, and I was humbled to accept his invitation to be Victoria's Shadow Treasurer. In the time since I was appointed at the end of last year there have been a number of things that have come across my desk which are of deep concern to me. I will mention just a couple in the time that I have remaining.

Yesterday the Reserve Bank of Australia made a decision to raise interest rates in this state. I am certain that there will be home owners right around this state – mums and dads trying to put food on the table, to make ends meet, to pay their school bills, to pay their power bills, to pay their mortgage – who will find that an interest rate rise will not be in their favour. It will make making ends meet all that more difficult. But something we should also remember is the fact that the state of Victoria is also subjected to interest rate rises. Yesterday's interest rate rise of 0.25 per cent will result in an additional \$390 million in net debt by 2025–26 for the state of Victoria. We talk in millions and we talk in billions. Let me put that into context: \$390 million could fund over 4000 maternity nurses, 1860 public housing units, 39 breast cancer centres or more than 5600 classroom teachers. We have a debt problem in this state; we really do, and frankly I am not convinced by the government's plan or lack of plan to deal with that particular issue.

I look forward to contributing more broadly during the course of this term of Parliament and advocating for the needs of my community.

Members applauded.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Before I call the member Geelong I would just like to acknowledge in the gallery former Speaker Judy Maddigan – any tips are well received, thank you – and Christine Campbell, former minister and member for Pascoe Vale.

Chris COUZENS (Geelong) (16:28): I am delighted and feel very privileged to be rising today as the re-elected member for Geelong. Geelong is on Wathaurong country. Wathaurong people have taken care of that land for more than 65,000 years, and I do want to acknowledge and pay tribute to the elders past and present and the work that they do in the Geelong community and how important that is to my community along with myself and others.

The people of Geelong voted for the Andrews government because we did what we said we were going to do. The people of Geelong have seen over the past eight years the work that this government has done. Geelong is booming. Geelong is really excited about what we have done, about what is in the pipeline and about what is to come. Our population growth is booming, and we have 2.1 per cent unemployment – things that we have not seen for a very, very, very long time.

But first there are a lot of thankyou's that I want to do. To my campaign team, headed up by Michael Tate, Connor Parker and Elaine Carbines – huge thanks to them. To all the volunteers that were involved in that campaign committee – a huge thankyou to them, because they are the ones that get us over the line, which is so important. To my staff Michael, Georgia, Christian, Isabella, Jeannie and Joe – without them I would not be standing here today, so I do want to thank all of them.

To the many ALP supporters and ALP members who worked tirelessly right across the Geelong region – so not just in my electorate of Geelong but in Lara, Bellarine, South Barwon and of course the Western District – I pay tribute, because as a collective we have been able to turn the Geelong region completely Labor, which we are all very proud of, and we have been able to continue to do that. I do want to congratulate the member for Lara and the member for Bellarine, who are new members to this place, because they have had to work really hard to step into big shoes. Lisa Neville, the past member for Bellarine, and John Eren, the past member for Lara – theirs are big shoes to fill. They worked

tirelessly to get over the line and win those seats, so I pay tribute to them, because having been there myself in 2014 I know what it is like.

I do want to also congratulate all the new members who have made their inaugural speeches today and in the previous sitting in December, because it shows us the calibre of people who are entering this Parliament and the importance of that. But of course the number of women that are coming into this Parliament is fantastic as well, particularly in the regions.

I also do want to thank the union movement and the mighty Geelong Trades Hall for all their support for all of us across the region. Those workers, delegates and union officials support us to get over the line so that we can deliver for working people in the Geelong region, so I do appreciate their support.

Thank you to the Victorian ALP campaign team, the caucus communications unit and the ministers for all the work that they have done – but of course a huge thankyou to the Premier, who was just tireless in the work that he did throughout this campaign and put up with a lot of crap as well. As I said, I am really pleased that Geelong is now completely a sea of red, and it has continued to be that after this election.

I do want to thank the people of Geelong for giving me the opportunity to represent them in the 60th Parliament. It really is a great privilege to represent my community, to listen to them, to find out what the issues are and to visit schools and different community organisations, listening to them and then coming back and working with this amazing government to deliver on what we need. And of course during the 59th Parliament we were able to deliver so much for Geelong, which is obviously the reason why they supported us at the 2022 election.

In the health space, particularly during the pandemic, which was so challenging for all of us, to nurses, doctors, support staff, cleaners, caterers, attendants in our hospitals, paramedics and aged care and nursing home and disability support staff I say thank you for all the work that you have done. But they have also said thankyou to us by giving us the great privilege of representing them again in the 60th Parliament.

All the Aboriginal leaders and the many organisations in our community during COVID really stepped up and worked hard to ensure that their community was kept safe. To the multicultural organisations and groups, teachers and staff in schools, kinders and child care, retail staff and the many more that we relied on during that difficult time during the pandemic, a huge thankyou for what they have done and again a thankyou for putting their trust in us to represent them again in this 60th Parliament.

In Geelong there has been a huge boost in a whole range of things, including our schools. We rebuilt the Gordon TAFE over the last eight years, and during the last term we rebuilt the culinary school – a state-of-the-art culinary school has been delivered – the Kitjarra Aboriginal education centre, which I am so proud of, and made the announcement of the first-ever Indigenous culinary school, which will be established in this term, which is just fantastic. I do want to give a special thanks to Gayle Tierney in the other place, who ensured that those things were funded and that we looked after the TAFE students.

Of course free TAFE has made a huge difference in my community. I have the opportunity to move around my community and talk to people. I often say good governments change lives, good policy changes lives – and that is exactly what we have done. I have heard that time and time again everywhere I go from people who have been TAFE students. They have completed it and have now got a career pathway. For many of those people their families never had that opportunity, and free TAFE is actually now providing that opportunity so that they can get a career. It addresses some of the issues around poverty that we know are out there in our community. So free TAFE has made a huge difference in many people's lives.

We have rolled out solar panels in schools, mental health practitioners, major upgrades to Newcomb Secondary College and Barwon Valley School and free kinder. The feedback from parents about free kinder has been extraordinary. I get emails and people stopping me at different events thanking this

government for what they have done, because that free kinder makes such a huge difference for so many families. The commencement of the women's and children's hospital is another fantastic thing for the people of Geelong. Again, in talking to many families, they often say to me that it will save them having to travel to Melbourne to the Royal Children's Hospital, having those facilities on their doorstep, and they are very grateful for that.

The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System delivered a huge number of recommendations, but Geelong was a big focus. The mental health drug and alcohol hub is currently being built in Moorabool Street in Geelong and is due to be finished this year. That will make an enormous difference to people who are experiencing mental health issues. They can walk in off the street and get the support that they need – something that we heard during the royal commission was a huge failing in our system. The youth mental health beds – that building will start this year. It will make a huge difference for young people in our community. Many young people have to go to Melbourne because there are just not the beds in Geelong to accommodate their needs. The acute mental health facility that was opened a few months ago has now been completed. People are now using that facility, and that makes a huge difference in the community of Geelong.

The early parenting centre is underway – it is coming out of the ground as we speak – which will make a huge difference for people across the Geelong region. Parents that are struggling with newborn babies or little people that need that additional support will be able to go there, stay for a couple of nights, a week – whatever it might take – and get the expert support that they will need. The children's emergency department is incredible. It is about to begin. We released the designs only last week. That will make a huge difference to the demands on our emergency department services in Geelong. We know that there are issues for children being in that environment, so to have a specific children's emergency department is going to be huge.

The Ngarrimili Aboriginal centre fit-out that we funded for First Peoples employment will make a huge difference. I am so proud that we were able to fund that fit-out. That will open later this year and will be there as a shining light during the Commonwealth Games as well, which is really exciting. The convention and exhibition centre is well underway. I know we copped heaps of criticism from those opposite and from one particular federal senator, but I can assure the house that that is well underway. We are really excited about what that is going to bring for my community of Geelong.

The green spine and the laneways projects in the revitalisation process of Geelong are booming. People are loving it. They are seeing the difference.

There is the dog park in Belmont – and I know dog parks are only a small sort of project, but they make a huge difference to people in my community. They were celebrating the fact that we had a dog park open in Belmont. Of course there is the redevelopment of the Geelong Arts Centre, which is a very well loved centre in our Geelong community – the fact that we are now doing the second stage of that, which is looking extraordinary. So if you ever get the opportunity, drive through Little Malop Street in Geelong and have a look at the Geelong Arts Centre. It is a state-of-the-art facility.

The incorporation of Aboriginal culture has been absolutely incredible for the Geelong community as well as for First Peoples in my community. Changing Places facilities – the hoist on a new platform at Barwon River so people with disabilities can use a hoist to get into canoes and boats – is very well accepted by the Geelong community. Major events have included White Night, the Foo Fighters concert that we have all heard about numerous times in this place, the Cadel Evans race and the Festival of Sails. All those big events really promote Geelong but also give people a sense of pride in the community.

The safe spaces, Pride games and a Rainbow road map with the LGBTQI+ community have been very welcomed in Geelong, but we still have a lot to deliver. The SEC – we have heard a bit about that this week in this place. That was just such an exciting announcement and very much welcomed by my community. The Geelong East Primary School upgrade, the Bannockburn SES new facility, the

Bannockburn scout hall, the winter reserve upgrade for the Belmont Lions – there is so much, along with the Commonwealth Games legacy, that will be left in my community of Geelong. It is very exciting what we have done and what we are now looking forward to, but I know there is a lot more to do, and I am working with my community and listening to what they have got to say, as I have already mentioned.

I feel proud and privileged to be part of the Andrews Labor government in this 60th Parliament, with its great leadership and a commitment to all Victorians, including regional Victoria. Those on the other side carp about regional Victoria not getting its fair share. Well, let me tell you, just drive down through the streets of Geelong and you will find we are certainly getting our fair share, because equity is at the heart of what we do. That is the important thing for all of us on this side of the house. Everything we do is around equity. It is about inclusion. It is about accessibility. It is about providing our communities with what they need – and big projects that we are not too scared to deliver on. We are delivering and we are getting on with it. So it is a great privilege to be back here again, and I am looking forward to the next four years.

Members applauded.

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (16:43): It is of course fabulous to be able to return to this place and offer my address-in-reply to the Governor's speech. I am thankful also that I am able to follow the member for Geelong's contribution, where she spoke about how much the Labor government invests in regional Victoria because 'you only need to walk through the streets of Geelong'. It may surprise the government that there is actually an enormous amount of Victoria further west of Geelong. In fact my electorate, which has now expanded, represents about 19 per cent of the state – all of it west of Geelong. The amount that Labor allocated as election commitments to my part of the state was absolutely at paltry levels. It certainly did not show the level of equity that the member for Geelong just said the Labor government holds at its heart. In fact this is probably representative of what we hear from the Andrews Labor government time and time again. We hear these words, we hear these promises and we hear these commitments, but when it comes to looking at what the outcomes are, they are hollow words. That is what we have seen over the last four years.

I am in my third term of Parliament – I am in opposition yet again – but I know that it is a very, very important role, because if we do not have a strong opposition, we do not have a strong government. It is our role as opposition members to hold the government to account, and when they make vast statements which are along the lines of 'We're delivering for all Victorians', it is up to people like me to stand up and say, 'No, you're not'. You are not delivering the healthcare outcomes for the people in our local communities that make it fair and equitable. You are letting down our community by not fixing our roads, by allowing them to continue to degrade and crumble while we see budget cut after budget cut in consecutive years. We are seeing lives lost on our roads because there is not any action – because there is not a specific fund for our local councils to dip into to help them to manage their roads rather than lifting the rates over and over again. Our schools are being left to decline, and our hospitals urgently need upgrades. They urgently need support to be able to attract more medical professionals – more nurses, more allied health professionals – and yet they see more and more cuts and money shifted from our smallest communities into larger regional centres. In my instance in Lowan all the money, all the focus, is going to Ballarat. It is our local people that are missing out. They are Victorian, just as you are Victorian if you live in Melbourne, Ballarat, Bendigo or Geelong. Our people are important. They contribute greatly to this state. I believe in them, and that is why I put my hand up at the 2022 election to again represent the good people of Lowan.

In my address-in-reply I would like to specifically mention the newest members of the National Party room, because I think we have all been awestruck and inspired by just how talented these people who are brand new to politics are and how they are already proving that they are going to be a very, very strong voice for rural and regional Victoria. It is fabulous to see that the Nationals are now again representing the regions of Mildura. We have got the Nationals member for Mildura here in the

chamber, the Nationals member for Shepparton here in the chamber and the Nationals member for Morwell here in the chamber –

Brad Battin interjected.

Emma KEALY: We will be happy to give you a membership form, Brad. We have also of course got in the upper house our new member for Northern Victoria Gaelle Broad, who gave an excellent inaugural speech yesterday. And we have had the transition of the seat of Euroa. Steph Ryan did a fabulous job representing the Nationals and representing her electorate and all rural and regional people across the past eight years. We all miss Steph greatly. We are thankful for her amazing contribution to the party and to her people, but we also have to welcome Annabelle Cleeland, the new Nationals member for Euroa, who I think showed today that she absolutely will be a fierce advocate for her region. She was enormously brave in sharing her own story about how she had been let down by Victoria's healthcare system in rural and regional Victoria. She will take local community members' stories right to the public. She will shine a light on those issues, and she will be another strong voice for rural and regional Victorians and make sure we are never, ever forgotten.

I would like to make a special mention also of the continuing members of the National Party. We did not lose any seats. The member for Ovens Valley is in the chamber. We have also got the members for Gippsland South and Gippsland East and the member for Murray Plains – I had better not forget the boss. We have got Melina Bath, member for Eastern Victoria, as well in the other place. Everybody worked tirelessly over the election campaign. We all own a little bit of the success of having an additional four in number in the party room, and I thank and congratulate everybody who assisted us to achieve that bigger party room. I will admit that I was a little bit teary when we had our first party room meeting, seeing not just the numbers but the talent we have got. We have got a fierce voice in Parliament. We will fight for rural and regional Victoria as the Nationals always have.

In the electorate of Lowan I am so enormously appreciative of the support that I receive, not just from the voters. I am so thankful. I do not care whether I got one vote over the 50 per cent or whether I got an enormous margin. The margin does not matter to me; it is all about being able to continue being a strong voice for the people of Lowan. I am thankful in particular for the support of the newer regions in my electorate of Stawell, Great Western, Mortlake and Caramut. My electorate has grown by about 5000 square kilometres since the last time I stood in this place. I do proudly declare that biggest is best, and while there is an enormous amount of empty space in my electorate – our population is spread out quite thinly across the region – we certainly are worth our weight in gold when it comes to providing food for our region and when we provide wool for our region and dairy products for our region. Even things like berries we grow profusely. We have got enormous things to offer for the state. We create a lot of wealth for the state – we just ask for that to come back in a fair and equitable way.

To all of those people who provided support to me – whether it was at the ballot box with their first or second or last preference, I do not really mind – thank you so much for participating in the democratic process. To the other candidates who put their hand up, thank you so much for providing a choice and putting an option on the table. Thank you so much to the National Party membership, the people who turned out to hand out how-to-vote cards, the people who put their hand in their pocket to financially support the campaign and the people who were just out there sharing Facebook messages, sending out emails and chatting to their mates about Emma not being a bad rep and 'We should vote for her'. I really appreciate whatever you did in whatever way. I owe my next four years to you, and I will give back as much as I possibly can and fight for what you need every inch of the way.

I also want to pass on my thanks to my fabulous staff because, while it is 'Emma Kealy MP' in the media releases and at the events and that is the signage on the office, I would not have nearly the number of successes I have and enjoy if I did not have an amazingly strong team around me. So thank you so much to Carly, Wendy, Helen and Sara – and Arlene, who just started last week – and also to Suzanne, Kym, Kelsey, Christine and Angela. You are kind and considerate. You listen and you always deliver for people who are in contact with our office, and I cannot thank you enough for all

you contribute for the people of Lowan. You are the unsung heroes of the region. You mean a lot to me and I thank you, not just for your support and for all the work you do but also for your friendship. If I can give a special shout-out and thank you to Carly, because she recently gave birth to a darling little boy, Teddy, who made a visit to the office a couple of weeks ago. He is a gorgeous little boy, a lovely addition to their family. So congratulations Aaron, Carly, Bonnie, Louis and the newest little member of the family, Teddy.

We are a fabulous party. We fight for the people that live in rural and regional Victoria, and it is very disappointing to see when you read through the Governor's address the little focus that is on regional Victoria in the targets for the government. And let us be clear: the Governor does not write this address. They do not write the speech, it is the government that writes the speech for the Governor, so when we look at that, there is an extraordinarily limited amount of things in there that local people need in my community.

I would like to put on the record – and I excuse, because it is a long list – all of the projects that we made a financial commitment to over the election campaign. The reason I want to put this on the record is because we did not see election commitments in any depth from other parties, including from the government. So I really want to make sure that there is a level of apolitical activity around this. Labor do not have the resources to put someone on the ground in the electorate of Lowan, and so I am more than happy – and I have written to all of the ministers responsible for these projects – to ensure that in the lead-up to the budget they understand that these projects were not selected for political reasons or to win votes. They are legitimate projects that need to see investment this year to be able to be delivered for these communities.

In education we had funding commitments for St Patrick's Catholic Primary School in Stawell, St Brigid's College in Horsham, Kaniva College, Casterton Primary School and also for childcare facilities. I do note that the government has since announced funding for the Dunmunkle childcare centre. We know that we have childcare deserts all throughout my electorate, and so I would love to see a greater focus by this government on developing infrastructure for child care but also training up more people to work in child care, because we simply are not seeing that flow at the moment. Hamilton and Dunkeld are facing a critical issue when it comes to access to child care at the moment. I urge the government, as their next step, to focus on investment in that area.

In health care, something where it is essential to attract people to live in our regions and fill our jobs, because we have got so many job vacancies, and also to stay, because people want access to high-quality health care, we made commitments of \$6.65 million to Mortlake Community Health Centre – well-needed funding – that hospital desperately needs redevelopment. The Hamilton campus of Western District Health Service desperately need \$17 million to upgrade their ICU and emergency department. It is absolutely disgusting, the conditions that are there. It is not fair for the staff, it is not fair for the patients and people who present there, and it is not fair for the paramedics. We desperately need to see that allocation of funding in this year's budget. Also Willaura hospital – it is one of only three commitments that I made in 2018 that have not yet been delivered. I will continue to fight for that investment of \$7 million in that facility.

In relation to sports, which is the lifeblood, really, of our networking and fitness in our region, we committed to Horsham's city oval; Warracknabeal's Anzac Park; Horsham's Coughlin Park tennis courts; the Dimboola Bowling Club, who have had their green absolutely scarified by corellas, and I do urge the government to urgently release their corella management plan; Balmoral Bowling Club; the Stawell Central Park new electronic scoreboard – of course this is the home of the Stawell Gift; we want to see an allocation of funding for the Stawell Gift in the long term; and also the Neil Davis park. It has fallen through the gaps of election results on many occasions over the past few years, between state and federal commitments. Please fund the Neil Davis park. They need the investment. They deserve the investment. It is an excellent case.

Also in terms of regional development, there are really good ideas that are supported by the community that will be transformational for our region. Horsham aerodrome needs to have an investment so that we can upgrade the facility and get it up to standard so it can receive domestic flights, because we will need to have a domestic airline in place when the mineral sands opportunities are realised in the coming years. If we do not start developing now, we are not going to have access to an immediate opportunity to put in place a domestic airline, which will also support people who already live in the local community. We wanted to put in place a master plan to finally look at properly returning passenger rail to Horsham and Hamilton and just see what the feasibility is and what is the best way to go about that. We need to develop the Pomonal tunnel track. There is a water tunnel that runs through the Grampians National Park. It could be converted into an everyday walkway, which would attract tourists from around the world. Who would think you could walk through a mountain in western Victoria? Let us see some investment to develop that.

We also want to see the end of the gas monopoly in our region. I know that this government wants to shut down gas as a source of energy, but it is still very, very important that our people are not ripped off when it comes to getting these ever-increasing price hikes because there is only one supplier of gas to the local area.

The Casterton rail trail down to Sandford needs some funding – and the Natimuk weir and also our roads of course. The Western Highway duplication – the federal government again kicked the funding for that down the road. Lives are being lost on that road nearly every few weeks. We need to see that finalised sooner rather than later. And the Coleraine-Edenhope Road, near Coleraine, I think should be renamed Gus's Hill rather than the Big Dipper –

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member will pause for a moment. If conversations need to be had, they need to be had outside.

Emma KEALY: because Gus McCure did an excellent job in advocating for funding for that, and we have finally seen works done on that just last week.

There is a lot that we want to achieve over the next four years. There is everything that I will do: I will stand side by side with my community to make sure we do deliver for regional Victoria. I will give local people a strong voice in this place. I will always stand by their side, and every single day I have over the coming four years I will fight for my electorate for a fair deal and make sure that local people's voices are heard.

Members applauded.

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (16:58): Thank you, Deputy Speaker, and congratulations to you on your appointment and elevation. I congratulate the Speaker on her appointment for this term as well.

I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin nation, and recognise their continued custodianship and connection to land, water and country. I particularly acknowledge the co-chairs of Victoria's First Peoples' Assembly, Aunty Geraldine Atkinson and Marcus Stewart. Here in Victoria we are delivering on the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* through voice, treaty and truth.

I extend my congratulations to the Premier, the ministry and all Labor members on being elected for a historic third term of the Andrews Labor government, which I am so grateful to be a part of. I commend the Leader of the Opposition on his appointment and extend my very best wishes to all parliamentarians from all sides, who I look forward to working with, particularly the class of 2022.

It is the greatest honour of my life to be standing here in this chamber as the new member for Pascoe Vale, Coburg and parts of Brunswick West. As the son of migrant parents and as a lifelong local of these suburbs, where my wife Anna and I are now raising our own family, it is truly humbling to have been chosen as the community's representative. As the new local member, first and foremost my

priority will be to serve the whole community – every constituent – as best I can, regardless of their political persuasion, background or circumstance. I will be striving to make Pascoe Vale an even better and fairer place to live, learn, work, raise a family and retire in. I am grateful to the local Labor members and the electorate of Pascoe Vale, and I am so proud of the positive local campaign that we ran that brought the community together.

Labor achieved a swing towards us in primary votes at the ballot box, including the highest primary vote across 20 of the 23 election booths. I thank the Victorian Labor Party, which I have been a member of for many years, and the local members for their ongoing support – without you I would not be here. Rarely before has a Victorian Labor government received such a comprehensive third-term endorsement, and even rarer still is it to have so many Labor members sitting on this side of the chamber as well as on that side of the house. This is a rare gift which we must never, ever take for granted and work harder than ever before to build on.

In being elected as the sixth Labor member for Pascoe Vale, I am cognisant of the immense contribution of my predecessors. From the most recent member Lizzie Blandthorn to Christine Campbell and Kelvin Thomson, who all graciously served our community, I thank you for your ongoing counsel and support. To previous members who have represented parts of the area as well – Carlo Carli, Peter Gavin, Tim Read, Tom Roper – thank you all for your service.

It gives me immense pride to represent the suburbs of Pascoe Vale, Coburg and Brunswick West, which have a deep and diverse history. Located on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri people, situated between the Moonee Ponds Creek and Merri Creek from Boundary Road to Hope Street, the Pascoe Vale electorate is nestled in the heart of Melbourne's vibrant northern suburbs. The community has a rich First Nations, multicultural, manufacturing, working-class, industrial, creative, activist history that has helped shape the identity of modern-day Victoria. Just like the bluestone-lined streets, our people are as hardworking and resilient as they come, yet as empathetic as can be.

First settled by migrants seeking refuge from hard times in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales from 1837, the area went on to grow around what has become known as Pentridge prison, an institution older than this state and indeed this Parliament. Since then the area has evolved to capture the very best of what our state has to offer – multiculturalism – with generations of migrants calling Pascoe Vale home, including many of Italian, Greek, Lebanese, Turkish and Maltese heritage. Today almost 50 per cent of local residents have parents who were born overseas. We have a large second-generation community of families, including both my wife and me, and we continue to welcome new generations of migrants from India, China, Nepal, Pakistan and many, many other places.

I became involved in politics because I have long believed that we all play a role in building a better future. I joined Labor because it is the party that fosters aspirations, leaving no-one behind, the party with fairness and equality at its very core, the light on the hill. It has been the policies of Labor governments that have given my family and me the opportunity to be standing in this chamber.

My mum was born in 1946, growing up in the small town of Pianopoli in the province of Catanzaro in Calabria – as was the member for Mill Park – and graduated from primary school, the highest level expected for girls in those days in southern Italy. My dad Pietro was born not far away in Nicastro. Answering the calls originally put out by then Labor Prime Minister Ben Chifley and immigration minister Arthur Calwell, my family migrated to Australia aboard the ships the *Galileo Galilei* and the *Angelina Lauro*. Like so many other post-World War II migrants, including my mother-in-law Pauline Owens, who departed Northern Ireland to flee the troubles, or my father-in-law Andreas Chrysanthou, who left his homeland of Cyprus, migrants of that era came with nothing but a suitcase on their backs: a suitcase that was filled with dreams – dreams for a better future, not just for themselves but for their children and their grandchildren. They came with very little in their pockets but a whole lot in their hearts to give to their new country, which was willing to embrace them so enthusiastically.

Over their working lives my parents held numerous blue-collar jobs across the north. My mum sewed and packed dusters, made belts and women's trousers and served surgeons of the day in the old doctors dining room just around the corner from here at St Vincent's Hospital. My dad worked as a packer and a bus tyre repair man, followed by stints at Visy and Ford whilst waiting in the evening. My godfather Pietro Pera worked an incredible 40 years at the Ford factory in Broadmeadows.

We were raised in a very modest California bungalow in Jamieson Street, Coburg, where we largely grew up speaking Italian, with very few luxuries but with plenty of love and plenty of homemade pasta sauce. We were as working class as you could get. Along with the support of my parents, it was the safety net sustained by successive Labor governments that provided us with the opportunities we needed to aspire. I was the beneficiary of a good public education, attending Coburg West Primary and Northcote High School, and I was taught by the wonderful teachers who are here in the gallery today: Agatha Blatti, my grade 4 teacher, Helen Anderton and Gary Israel, my former principal.

Whitlam's and Hawke's reforms to education gave me the chance to be the first of my family to complete year 12 and then go on to graduate from university at RMIT. When I started my first job in hospitality it was the minimum wage standards and conditions that helped me to stand on my own two feet. When my parents fell on tough times work-wise, and there were plenty, it was the social safety net that provided us the support to get to the next pay cheque. When we got sick it was Medicare that kept us healthy.

Growing up in the northern suburbs during the 1990s I also learned the experience about not having Labor governments in place. As Jeff Kennett pursued the 'Victoria – on the move' agenda it was the northern suburbs that wrote the cheque and paid the price through school closures, cuts and sell-offs we will never forget. It was through these experiences that I was inspired to become politically active and community minded. So when our area did not have a dedicated youth hub, I had the opportunity to lead the Oxygen youth centre project, opening Merri-bek's then first-ever co-located youth centre with youth services. When the Robinson Reserve and Reynard Street Neighbourhood House were experiencing challenges, I had the opportunity to become chair and help revitalise the house to put it back on track. With our community campaign to reopen a years 7 to 12 high school in Coburg – thanks to Cate Hall, who is in the gallery today too – as well as to save Edgars Creek, to stand up for pensioners or to maintain the curfew at Essendon Airport, I had the opportunity to support locals to secure these outcomes.

Work-wise, I have had the privilege to work across all three levels of government, beginning as Kelvin Thomson's electorate officer and adviser for trade and schools during his parliamentary secretary days. I was then the senior adviser to the former Minister for Tourism and Major Events, Minister for Sport and Minister for Veterans, John Eren, otherwise known as the minister for everything. I also had the pleasure of working in senior advocacy roles at Brimbank council, CPR Communications and Darebin City Council.

But this is also not the first time that I have proudly put up my hand to serve the state. Growing up I was also called on to be the goalkeeper for the Victorian football team – or soccer team in those days – and yes, for the record, before you hear it from anyone else, I was also the 2005 junior Mr Victoria bodybuilding champion. I always knew I would be back to serve the state. Through every role I have gained valuable insights, all of which provide me with the foundations, I hope, to be an effective local member. I am committed to helping build a better community through delivering on job, education, transport, health and social justice outcomes. I have been elected to be a champion for the community.

Every Victorian deserves the security of a job with a decent wage. Victorian Labor has prioritised job creation since 2014, with almost 600,000 new jobs now created and with statewide unemployment now at historically low levels. However, according to North Link's *The Future Workforce: Melbourne's North* report our region will require at least another 182,000 local jobs by 2031 to close the gap between local jobs and resident workers. Despite Merri-bek's employment, skill and education outcomes having continued to improve over time, around 15 per cent of employed people actually live

and work locally – one of the lowest employment self-sufficiency rates for any LGA. I believe we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to address these challenges by working towards making Coburg a jobs hub for Melbourne’s north. With Labor’s new world-class stations at Coburg and Moreland, the \$17 million new science and tech hub at Coburg High, the \$6 million redevelopment of Coburg City Oval and the transformation of Pentridge into a visitor destination, we now have the catalyst projects to begin realising this vision.

As I mentioned, I am the proud product of our local education system, and as a local dad I know just how importantly families value the quality of local kinders and schools. I am very much looking forward to the rollout of free kinder in my community, which is being accompanied by a \$10 million investment to upgrade 11 local kinders. I am also very much looking forward to working through the development of a new Merri-bek education plan for the north. This plan will help to ensure we continue to meet the future needs of local secondary students and families, building on the \$150 million that Labor has invested into upgrading every local school since 2014.

I am a firm believer that all Victorians deserve access to safe and sustainable transport networks. In this regard I am also proud that it has been a Labor government that has finally removed the dangerous level crossings in Coburg – thank you, Minister – at Moreland, Reynard Street, Munro Street and Bell Street, and that Labor is building the Metro rail tunnel, which will increase the capacity for both the Upfield line and the Craigieburn line. I also welcome the opportunity to advocate, however, for further transport improvements across the community, firstly on the Upfield railway line. While we have committed to the removal of a further eight crossings through Brunswick, opportunities exist for additional improvements along the line which if fully realised can actually become the economic development spine for the whole of the northern corridor. Advocating for improvements along the Craigieburn line will also be a priority of mine. Thirdly, the commissioning of Melbourne’s northern bus review will help us to improve local bus routes and patronage. Fourth, with many young families and elderly residents now living in the area, opportunities to improve road and pedestrian safety as well as accessibility for all commuters will remain a priority. And lastly, as a proud Transport Workers Union member, I will also be focused on ensuring that we as a state continue to elevate our role in how we support and recognise transport, the gig economy and aviation workers.

Our health and wellbeing is paramount. Regardless of the age, background or circumstance, everyone in our community deserves access to quality health care. It is health and community workers that make up the biggest industry that local residents in my area are employed in – almost 14 per cent. Many of these workers are the backbone of our hospitals, social services and med tech sectors across Melbourne. I have doorknocked many of them.

At a local level there are significant opportunities to improve jobs and services for health workers as well as patients, which I welcome the chance to pursue through the delivery of the new Royal Melbourne and Royal Women’s hospitals, upgrades of the Northern and Austin hospitals, and our plans for a new mental health hub in Coburg – finally – partnering with Merri community health. The proposed Coburg health precinct project will create 1000 jobs, and there will be the rollout of free nursing and health studies. Along with more health services our local sporting clubs will also play a big role in preventative health outcomes. Whether it is through the rollout of female-friendly change rooms or other projects, I look forward to working with them.

The environment is fundamental to all life on earth, and real action on the environment is necessary if we are to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. Bringing back the SEC will help us to transition our economy to net zero emissions whilst keeping the lights on, businesses going and workers in jobs. Locally I look forward to working on a whole number of opportunities, including protecting and enhancing the Moonee Ponds Creek, Merri Creek and Edgars Creek, improving tree canopy cover across the north and progressing opportunities around the circular economy and recycling as well as incentivising local residents to transition away from gas and support the take-up of electric-powered households, buses and vehicles. I will be committed to building a fairer and more socially just

community through all of these and many other priorities. Whether it is mental health, cost of living or family violence, I will always be standing with people.

My journey to this place has been made possible by a village of people over so many years. Firstly I extend my eternal, heartfelt thanks and appreciation to the people of Pascoe Vale for entrusting me to be their local representative. Thank you to the dedicated Labor Pascoe Vale team and the hundreds of local Labor Party members, true believers and volunteers. While there are so many to mention, I would like to give a special thanks to Wayne Swan, Richard Marles, Jana Stewart and John Eren for launching my campaign events. To the La Trobe University and Young Labor activists, to the de facto member for Wills, Mimi Tamburrino, and the many other campaign volunteers, I say thank you. Thank you to the sporting clubs and multicultural community members. A special mention, though, to the Persian Iranian community: your support is appreciated, and I am proud to stand in solidarity with you as you fight for freedom in Iran.

My thanks to the Victorian/Tasmanian branch of the Transport Workers Union, in particular former secretary John Berger, current secretary Mike McNess and assistant secretary Mem Suleyman. Thank you for your friendship and all that you do.

Thank you to all across the Labor movement who have continued to help and support me over the years, including past and current colleagues and community organisations, but namely, Senator Raff Ciccone, Michael Donovan, Sam Rae, Rob Mitchell, Anthony Carbines, Nat Suleyman, Matt Fregon, Sarah Connolly, Ella George, Kelvin Thomson, Christine Campbell, Judy Maddigan, Stephen Conroy, Phil Dalidakis, Maria Vamvakinou and so many others – thank you.

A special thanks of course to my wife and best friend Anna and our daughters Raffaella and Cleopatra for their love and support as I dedicated myself to the campaign and to now serving the community. Thank you for your sacrifices. I love each and every one of you beyond words. Anna is also a successful small business woman in her own right, and she truly inspires me every day. To my parents for all their hard work and sacrifices, to Lorenza, Roberto and Gianluca, and to all of my extended family and friends, many of whom are here or watching online – you know who you are, and I thank you for your lifetime support. And to those who are no longer with us but are watching from the other side of the stars, including my brother-in-law Tom Owens, Senator Mehmet Tillem and others who left us far too soon.

In conclusion, as members of Parliament we are given an honourable opportunity by the people of our electorates to work for the betterment of those that reside in our suburbs – the small business owners, the workers, the families, children, young people, the elderly and the disadvantaged. I thank the people of Pascoe Vale for placing their confidence in me, and I will work every day as hard as I can to do justice to that trust. Now let's do this, Pascoe Vale!

Members applauded.

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (17:20): It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak on the address-in-reply to the Governor's speech for the 60th Parliament. My congratulations, Speaker, to you on your election to this high office and also to all members. Having been first elected in 2006 myself, it makes me a little bit sentimental when I hear the new members of the house give their inaugural speeches. It takes me back 16 years, because it is a great honour which our communities have entrusted us with, to represent them, to serve them, to be their voice in this chamber.

I would like to thank the people of Malvern. They have elected me for a fifth time. They have done so with an increased majority, which is always pleasing, and it is certainly something that I never, ever take for granted. I live in my electorate. I love it, I am passionate about it, and it is the honour of my professional life to be their voice and their representative in this chamber. It is something I will never, ever take for granted, and I commit to serving them with just as much vigour and energy now as I did when I was first elected to represent them 16 years ago.

I would like to thank the other candidates and their teams: Darren Natale from the ALP, Mitchell Fuller from the Greens, Amelia Natoli from Animal Justice, Judy Schmidt from Family First and Steve Stefanopoulos. We had a very strongly contested, willing campaign, but it was one that was done with great courtesy, one that was done in the right spirit, which is the way democracy should be – yes, hard fought, yes, chasing down every vote, but done in the right way with the right spirit. I think it was a credit not just to the candidates and their teams but also to our democracy, so I would like to thank all those candidates and their teams for their efforts. I would like to thank the Victorian Electoral Commission staff, who undertake a difficult challenge with great professionalism.

To my campaign committee and to my campaign director, Jack Cook – Jack was just a revelation. He has worked for me previously, when I was Leader of the Opposition. He worked in my electorate office for a period. But as my campaign director, he was outstanding. Nothing got past him. Everything was done. It is probably the first time I have been able to – not relax, because I worked harder on this campaign than I think I have worked on any campaign, but to have that confidence that somebody is in charge who just knows what they are doing was just outstanding. I am very grateful to Jack for all of his effort. To my Malvern electorate chairman Mark Stretton, who has been just an outstanding chairman for me; to my vice-chairs Julie Osborne and Stewart Stribling; to Jacquie Blackwell and Sujay Capoor and Holly Byrne – they have all been part of my campaign committee, they have all done outstanding jobs. I think we all know as candidates that while it might be our face on the corflute and it may be our name on the ballot paper, we really represent a team. We could not do it without those teams, and I am here to say thank you so much to my team.

Can I also note and thank my volunteer coordinator, Margaret Harrison. Sometimes getting the volunteers out to work on those pre-polls, to put up the signs in the front yards, is not always easy, but Margaret just did an outstanding job, ably assisted by Marg Hawker. It would be remiss of me not to thank the queen of pre-poll in the Malvern electorate, Trish McCann. Trish is a legend of the Liberal Party in my part of the world. No matter how early I was there at pre-poll, Trish always beat me. No matter how late I left, Trish was always there after me. We had to actually send her home at times, because she would have worked 24/7 if we had allowed her to do it. So to Trish: thank you so much for everything that you have done for me and to your daughter Simone. Simone was also just outstanding. Both of them were great supporters and really embodied the spirit of the volunteer. That is, I think, what we want to see and we want to see more of in our society in Victoria. We want to see people who are passionate about things and put their time and effort into it to contribute to a greater good. Whether it is through political parties or through community organisations like Rotary or whether it is through junior sporting clubs or conservation groups, we have all got an opportunity to contribute, and we should do more to recognise and thank volunteers, because they really are the heart and soul of what we do.

Can I thank all of my Liberal Party members and supporters in Malvern who helped me. Can I be unfashionable and also thank Liberal Party secretariat staff. I know that secretariat staff do not often get praised, particularly after an election loss, but can I just say I would like to place on record my thanks for all the work that they put in, because even for an unsuccessful campaign an enormous amount of work goes in. I would like to thank the staff who helped there, and last but certainly not least my electorate office staff, Annette Turnbull and Justin Huels. I was in my office when another member giving an address-in-reply made a similar comment, but the amount of people on the line in early voting who said to me that they had been helped by my staff was just fantastic. I have always said to my staff, 'You are my ambassadors when I am not in the office.' My staff just do a fantastic job, and I am very proud of the work they do and how they represent me and how they assist me to be the member for Malvern. So thank you very much, Annette and Justin.

To my family, to my wife Michelle who puts up with a lot, including me, and has done for many years, thank you so much for all your love and support. And to my two children Eleanor and Reagan. Eleanor was a year 12 student last year, so it was a very stress-free year in the O'Brien household, being an election year and a year 12 year! She turned 18 in time to be able to vote. We went along to the polling

booth together and were there side by side in the polling booth, and she very proudly said ‘Yes, Dad, I did vote for you’ – because there have been a few times where it might have been an issue. What I have not told her and what she is only finding out now is that I knew she had voted for me because I had already peeked over her shoulder. But I am very grateful for the love and support of my kids Eleanor and Reagan. They have been just outstanding, and I am very, very proud of them. To my mum Toni, to my brother Conor, my sister-in-law Nadine and young Tom O’Brien, who was just born in January last year, so it is his very first election but I am sure not his last – he has got a few years to go yet before we can get him on a polling booth.

To my friends, and I do not tend to mention my friends – I am not going to go into names – but to those who I have lunch with, to those I go to the footy with, to those I am on various WhatsApp groups with and to those who keep me sane, who keep me grounded, who are very quick to tell me if I am getting ahead of myself, thank you. Thank you for everything you do just to help me be hopefully a decent person. To those I play golf with – and on that note I do look forward to the annual Mooseters tournament to be played in a couple of weeks time. I will be seeing some of my colleagues down around Inverloch and we will be spending some money in regional Victoria and hacking up some golf courses, so that will be fun as well.

I think one of the reasons why I was able to secure an increased majority this time around was the really strong local campaign that we ran, particularly on local issues that matter to the people of my electorate. We used to have five level crossings in the Malvern electorate. When I was Treasurer back in the 2014–15 budget we funded the removal of the Burke Road one, and that was one of the worst in Melbourne. That was done. I think the current government got to cut the ribbon, but it was done, it was funded and it was organised by the former Liberal–Nationals government. And it was done rail under road. We consulted with the community. The community said, ‘We want rail under road.’ They said, ‘We don’t mind some development around the station. If you’re going to rebuild the station that’s fine and if you want to do some sensible development to offset some of the costs.’ They were fine with that, and we listened to the community and we gave them what they wanted, and it is fantastic.

Now, the current government removed the Toorak Road level crossing, and unfortunately they chose sky rail. Everyone is delighted the level crossing is gone, but really sky rail was suboptimal, to put it mildly, and particularly for those people who live right along that corridor. They are still feeling the effects of that.

We have got three more level crossings. We have got Tooronga Road in Malvern, we have got High Street in Glen Iris – which, Deputy Speaker, I am sure you are only too familiar with, given it borders your electorate too – and Glenferrie Road, Kooyong. Now, there is an independent, objective assessment of how bad these level crossings are. It is called the Australian level crossing assessment model, or ALCAM, and ALCAM lists the Tooronga Road level crossing as the 39th worst in Victoria – but this government has no plans to remove it. High Street, Glen Iris, is the 53rd worst in Victoria – again, not on Labor’s list. Glenferrie Road, Kooyong, is the 71st worst in Victoria. Not only is it not on Labor’s list but the former federal Liberal government offered \$260 million. They actually put it on the table and said, ‘We’ll help you get rid of this’, and the Premier said, ‘No, thank you’. And now the federal Labor government has taken that money back, while the federal Labor MP for Higgins Michelle Ananda-Rajah has said nothing about \$260 million being ripped out of my community that could have been used to remove a dangerous and deadly level crossing. So my plea here is: when is the government going to stop playing politics with infrastructure? The government says, ‘We’re removing 130 level crossings.’ Well, these have been independently assessed as being the 39th, 53rd and 71st worst in Victoria. Why aren’t they on the list? They should have been three of the first 130 to be removed. I will continue to fight so that my community does not miss out. It is time for this government to stop playing politics with infrastructure and to look at merit instead of political margins when it is making decisions about what gets funded and where it gets funded.

We also proposed to extend the number 3 tram, which currently ends right outside my office, on the corner of Waverley Road and Darling Road, and move it almost a couple of kilometres down the road

– not even a couple of kilometres down the road – to link up with East Malvern station. Again, this is common sense. If we want to get people out of cars and if we want to link up public transport and get our trams and trains connected, this is an easy win. It is something that can be done, it is something that should be done, and it is something that I will continue to campaign for in this Parliament, whichever side of the chamber I am on.

Also can we please do something about our 40-kilometre zones. We have got a number of them in Malvern. There are two separate ones on Waverley Road, East Malvern. There is one in High Street; there is one in Malvern Road. Monday to Friday they start at either 7 am or 8 am, and they end at either 7 pm, 8 pm or 9 pm. On Saturday they start at 9 am or 8 am, and they finish at 1 pm, 5 pm, 8 pm or 9 pm, depending on which one it is. On Sunday they either do not operate at all or they start at 8 am and finish at 5 pm, 8 pm or 9 pm. Can you imagine the confusion? This is not a level crossing removal, this is just common sense. Can we please just get some common sense in there and keep Malvern moving? It was part of my campaign and is something that I am committed to doing. We have got a great area, but we need to keep it moving, and there are some very easy fixes that I want to see done in this term to do that.

I want to fight for a fair share. My constituents, they pay their taxes. They pay more than their fair share of taxes, but they do not get a fair return on investment. Our local state schools are not getting the love they need, they are not getting the support they need, and I will be a very strong voice for that to happen. It is Lloyd Street school's 100th anniversary this year.

James Newbury: Hear, hear! It's a good school.

Michael O'BRIEN: A great school, member for Brighton. I want to see Lloyd Street get some support. I think it would be a very nice and warranted birthday present for Lloyd Street to receive a 100th birthday celebration present of some upgrades, because they need it. It is a big school, but it needs some love. The parents do a great job fundraising, but it should not all be on the parents. They are state schools, they are entitled to state investment, and I will be arguing for that as well.

I am grateful to the member for Hawthorn, the Leader of the Opposition, for appointing me as Shadow Attorney-General. While our mutual friend Michael Corleone has said, 'You should keep your friends close and your enemies closer', I prefer to keep my friends closer. I am grateful to John for the trust that he has placed in me, and I look forward to working to hold the government to account to fix the crisis in our legal system. We have the worst backlogs in the country. Over 25,000 criminal cases in the Magistrates Court have been waiting for more than a year, and the government's answer is to appoint one new magistrate this year. It is not going to cut it.

We have got issues with integrity. We know there are at least four IBAC investigations that this government is currently involved in. We need to clean up politics. If we want to restore faith in democracy, that starts with our conduct in this place, and that starts with making sure that integrity is put first.

It is a great honour to be returned to this place. It was a long four years. For some of that period I was opposition leader. Some days went quickly, some days dragged, but I never lose sight of the fact that I am not here to serve anybody but the people of my electorate. I am very pleased to do so with the support of my party. I think that we have an opportunity in this term to tackle some of the real problems of this state, and we need to. Whether you want to look at our debt, whether you want to look at our cost of living or whether you want to look at our health system and our mental health system, there are so many issues here, so many challenges. It is on all of us to make sure that we leave this state a better place than we found it. I look forward to working with members here to do that in the 60th Parliament.

Members applauded.

Alison MARCHANT (Bellarine) (17:35): It is an honour to speak for the first time in this chamber as the member for Bellarine. I would like to acknowledge the First Nations people of this state and pay my respects to elders past and present while also acknowledging the Wadawurrung people, the traditional owners of the Bellarine region. The Bellarine Peninsula is known as Bella Wiyn in Wadawurrung language, which means ‘recline on the elbow by a fire’, a resting place. And what a magnificent resting place it is. It is a deep privilege to stand in this place and make my commitment to support our First Nations people in their self-determined journey to treaty in this state.

The Bellarine is a magical place, a landscape of rolling agricultural hills, beaches and unique townships, each having their own character and charm. In her valedictory speech, the former member for Bellarine Lisa Neville highlighted this:

Bellarine has a diverse group of communities ... with very different needs and voices. They all required investment in different services and infrastructure ...

Lisa was an incredible member for 20 years and leaves a lasting legacy across the Bellarine and Victoria. I thank Lisa for her service and her support, and I wish her all the best of life after politics. As I penned this speech, I reflected on Lisa’s significant contributions and my own journey to this place. Lisa’s service and success were underpinned by something that I know is integral to this job and something that is also imperative to me: that community is at the heart of any decision-making. I believe that understanding the community comes from being involved in the community, and whilst I have always been one to put my hand up to help, there was a time I did not fully appreciate the power of change that comes when a community works together, nor did I fully appreciate the worth of my own contributions. However, I now know, after 42 years and some key moments in my life, I will be a strong representative for the Bellarine.

The Bellarine has changed a lot over time. I was born and grew up in the small rural town of Leopold, now with a population of around 14,000 residents. I remember riding my bike to school through empty paddocks and walking with my sister to the milk bar for a 20-cent bag of lollies. My world was simple and friendly, where everyone would look out for each other. I know that this small-town upbringing and my parents’ commitment to community are the reasons why I feel so deeply about giving back. My mum, a former prep teacher, now follows her passion for local history and genealogy and has volunteered at the Geelong Heritage Centre for now over 40 years. My dad worked in manufacturing and construction, where he specialised in planning. With a passion for the environment, he spent much of his time planting thousands of Indigenous plants with the Friends of the Bellarine Rail Trail. Volunteers are an integral part of our community, and volunteering was fundamentally a part of my own upbringing.

After secondary school I studied teaching and became a primary school teacher, and with the help of wonderful, supportive teachers around me, I found my joy of teaching. At the start of my career I was not sure if it was for me – it is a tough job – but never underestimate the power of a wonderful school community. On that note, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our dedicated teachers working across the state. I understand and appreciate the impact you have on our young people, and I will do everything I can in this place to continue to support the work you do. But I would like to also acknowledge the work of teachers and support staff for those students who just need that little bit of extra help.

With permission from my son Noah, I would also like to share some of the teacher/mum guilt that is with me right now. I wish I had picked up on my son’s dyslexia earlier. I have learned so much in the past year, mainly from parents and experts from the Dyslexia Victoria Support group. I am deeply committed to learning more and doing what I can in this place to support students, parents and teachers that may lie awake at night wondering what else could be done differently. I have cried with my son as his schoolwork becomes challenging, and I continue to have that nagging feeling that as a teacher I should have known, but I did not. We must continue to review teacher training and professional development to ensure our schools are resourced to manage complex learning difficulties such as dyslexia. I do commend the recent Labor policy that will require every grade 1 student to have their

early literacy skills, including phonics, assessed, but this should just be the starting point to tackling a damning trend that tens of thousands of Australian kids are failing to meet literacy and numeracy standards. We must never give up on our future and strive for better outcomes.

It did not surprise me when my husband also became an educator. His calm and nurturing disposition is a perfect fit for the TAFE classroom. He is a proud product of TAFE, having studied and now teaching at TAFE. Naturally I am super proud of him, but I also want him to know this: Damien, you are changing lives. I listen to you as you speak passionately about your job, and I have witnessed the joy you have when your students pass their exams. You guide young people not only to a career, but you gently steer them in life. I know you care deeply about what TAFE offers, and you are a perfect example of the power of a TAFE education – and thanks to the investment of this Labor government, TAFE education is back. It offers pathways to rewarding jobs and life-changing opportunities.

After teaching and travelling around Australia, Damien and I thought we would start our own family. Today here I have my wonderful children Noah and Natalie. They are the most kind, funny and creative kids. Our family is like a jigsaw; it just fits together, but we are missing a piece. Our first child Georgia was born sleeping. Going into early labour she was too small to stay with us. It was a shock and a loss of what would be. Time heals the rawness of it all, but I do call this moment in my life ‘the before and after Alison’. The before Alison lived with rose-coloured glasses on. The after Alison discovered a community she did not know existed and an organisation in Geelong called Hope Bereavement Care. They support families that have lost a baby or child. I learned from other bereaved parents that sharing the pain with others that get it can and does help. The after Alison was probably always there, but it was Georgia who showed me my inner strength. Hope Bereavement Care is supported through generous community foundations, an important and vital community service I am really proud to support.

My own childhood was filled with a large extended family, and visiting my grandparents’ farm was a highlight – memories of busy shearing sheds, moving cattle and hay carting in the scorching heat. Being the sixth-generation farmer now, agriculture is in my blood, and it is actually the catalyst for why I am here today.

I would like to take you back to 2012. In small country towns across Victoria communities were learning about the very real risk of fracking, a dangerous process of drilling that fractures the ground to release gas. It carries risks to our water, productive agricultural land and overall community health. Environmentalists, First Nations peoples and farmers worried about the land and the towns being fractured and ultimately destroyed. There is no doubt that fracking would undo our proud Victorian clean and green agricultural sector. The stakes were high, but when you are faced with a challenge, you organise. With support from Friends of the Earth and the national Lock the Gate organisation I was proud to help build a grassroots movement like no other, and 75 Victorian towns declared themselves gas field free. We even had 2000 sheep move into formation in a paddock near Hamilton to spell out the words ‘Ban gas’ – they were very clever sheep. But as drone footage will show, unfortunately some of the viewers thought we were spelling ‘Bangas’, which unfortunately they might end up as. It was there that I found my passion for politics, and I learned from two amazing souls that I will forever remember as putting me on the path to community activism, namely Cam Walker and Chloe Aldenhoven. Thank you both for your guidance and the work you do.

After many years of fighting I am so proud to stand with a government that listened and put people first, leading the nation and legislating a ban on fracking. It was a community win, and to all that were involved, I know it was long and stressful. I know the fear you felt, but your advocacy and your resolve never wavered. The gas companies may have wanted to fracture our ground, but they were not able to fracture our united voice.

Having fought as a community advocate, I have had the privilege now of really witnessing the positive change that can be generated when community and government work together, and in this place as the member for Bellarine this is what I stand for: community at the heart of decision-making. Protecting

what we love is also part of the Bellarine electorate's DNA. We care deeply about the environment, and many volunteer their time and energy to community service. People are what make the Bellarine a special place to live, work and raise a family.

But the secret is out. In a survey titled 'Leading Places: The 100 Most Loved Destinations around the World for 2021' the Bellarine placed 25th in the world. It beat Bordeaux in France and Queenstown in New Zealand. It is hardly surprising when you consider the beauty of the Bellarine Peninsula. But as much as we love to showcase it to the world, those who live here know that the Bellarine was at risk of being loved to death by overdevelopment. Protection was needed. The former member for Bellarine Lisa Neville worked hard alongside the community to protect what we hold dear about the Bellarine and established the Bellarine Peninsula distinctive area and landscape. This 50-year policy for the Bellarine is important not only for our environment but to protect our unique historic townships. There are many reasons why we love the Bellarine, and it should be protected and enhanced, not degraded over time.

Arriving at this place does not happen without a village of support. I would like to thank some people who believed in me and put me onto this journey. To the Geelong Labor team – member for Geelong Christine Couzens, member for Lara Ella George, member for South Barwon Darren Cheeseman, member for Western Victoria Gayle Tierney, member for Corangamite Libby Coker – thank you for your support. And to former members Lisa Neville and John Eren: thank you. I would like to thank the Deputy Prime Minister, the Honourable Richard Marles, for his counsel and mentorship.

I would like to thank the unstoppable ALP Bellarine members. To my campaign committee, Tiffany McIntosh, Christian Bayfield, Annie Proctor, John Greenwood, Margaret and Taras Mikulin, Judith Brooks and Lena De Rosso; to Derek Costello and Alan G for their assistance with logistics; to the amazing doorknockers, phone bankers and those who volunteered at pre-poll and on election day, in particular Peter Deering, Athol Johnson, Ged Thompson, Drew English, Grant Marr, Ken Dodemaide, Jim and Phyllis Edmonstone, Lyn Mason, Yasmeeen Zohdy, John Scott, Rieny Nieuwenhof, Ian Parsons, Grace Clissold and Michael Tracey; and to the effervescent Rachel Hynds, who led our volunteers with passion and determination, working incredibly hard to tell our Labor story, a massive thankyou. And to all the Labor family and volunteers, who know the importance of Labor governments, thank you for your work across the Bellarine.

To my family, my mum and dad and Damien's parents, thank you for your unwavering support. To the Bellarine community, thank you for the privilege of representing you. I make it my commitment to work hard every day and deliver the representation you deserve. It is an honour to be the member for Bellarine, and I know my role comes with great responsibility. I hope I can shape solutions and do what is right for the people of the Bellarine based on the values of fairness, equality and compassion. My work will be guided by my commitment to making a positive difference in people's lives and to seeing the Bellarine continue to thrive.

At the start of this speech I said there was a time when I did not fully appreciate the power of community or know the worth of my place in it. Well, I now know I have found it. I found it in community activism, I found it in the farmers that never give up, I found it in the families that have lost a baby, I found it in the teaching staffroom, I found it across the Bellarine, I found it in Stuart when he told me he needed public transport to get to his medical appointments, I found it in Claire when she worried about her child starting kinder and I found it when young Rose and I spoke about climate action. They will all continue to have a voice in this place, because community will always be at the heart of my decision-making.

Members applauded.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (17:54): It is a great honour, an incredible honour in fact, to rise again on the address-in-reply. It reminds me of standing here in this place just over four years ago in the very back corner and saying strongly to my community, in the first words that I spoke in this

chamber, that I had heard them – I had heard the message in my community, and the message they sent to me and to this Parliament was that they expected a representative who reflected their views and those of modern Victoria. I made a commitment that night to doing exactly that: to reflect their views and to represent modern Victoria. It is an incredible honour, four years later, after making that commitment, to be returned by the good people of Brighton, Brighton East, Elwood and Hampton, and now Hampton East – an incredible honour.

I will let you in on a little secret. When I was elected and I spoke those words I made a pact with myself that I would be a member with only four years in mind. I felt that too many members of Parliament had eyes on decades-long careers and not what they would do in that time. They were thinking more about what they could do over time in terms of their own career rather than what they could do for their community. So I made a pact with myself to represent my community for four years – I did want to put myself forward again, but to work with that in mind, to work to that four-year term, do everything I could and throw everything that I could at that four years. I hope that my community has felt that I have done that, and I do believe that in their returning me to this chamber I have been given the great honour of their believing that to be so.

It has meant that over time I have spoken up strongly on issues that have been difficult – difficult for the community, difficult for this Parliament and difficult for my party. When I stood in this chamber four years ago I said my party represented a quarter of this chamber, and as I stand here now I could say similar words – a proud party that has not increased its proportional share of the chamber and therefore the representation in the community. After the most recent election I spoke about what I believe to be an existential crisis facing the Liberal Party, especially following the federal election and a series of findings from the Australian National University which show that at the federal election one in four voters under the age of 40 voted coalition – and one in five people born after 1996; 32 per cent of women and 38 per cent of men voted for the coalition; and 16 per cent of women and 9 per cent of men voted for the Greens. Those are sobering facts for any party that was not successful in an election to consider but be honest about. After the last state election I felt that it was important to stand up for the things that my community wanted me to and for modern Victoria.

Over that term I spoke out strongly on issues and bills that came before this chamber, including gay rights and environmental policy, as the shadow minister. I believe that a number of our policies that were put forward at the last election were state-leading policies, and it is disappointing that though some of the elements were pinched by the government, not all elements were. One of them, being legislating elements of climate targets into legislation, I think is something that the government should consider, because the community expects it. The community expects transparency. They expect to know what is happening with policy, and one of the ways you can provide that to the community is through legislation to make it clear.

Other issues that I spoke about over the term were issues of animal welfare, and then, throughout COVID, two very difficult issues – the first being the mental health crisis facing children at that time, which was an extremely distressing issue. When I first started to speak about it there were difficulties in the Parliament in dealing with that issue, with it being raised – and I understand that. I raised the issue probably in a confrontational way. Because the children that were speaking to me in my community were doing so from such a point of distress and despair, I felt I owed it to them to follow their requests to speak out strongly on their behalf, and that is what I did.

The other issue that I want to mention is that of the deaths in the community from the delays in ambulance arrivals, especially amongst children, and I had the opportunity of raising that issue with the Premier at the end of the last term. That also was an extremely distressing issue. What I hoped in raising those matters was that even though they were raised by the opposition we could work together to deal with those matters, that we as a Parliament could work together, because one of the insights that I can provide to the Parliament is, having worked for such a long time in the federal Parliament, there is an incredible difference between the ways the federal Parliament and the state Parliament operate. The federal Parliament works collaboratively across the aisle, not only in public but in private.

It does not mean that there is not politics in issues or policy matters. There is politics – there is always politics; we are in the business of politics – but when it comes to policy, members regularly talk and members regularly meet, not only to talk policy but to talk about the welfare of each other. I mean, these are issues that we should as a mature Parliament be doing. On behalf of Victorians we should be working together on those matters, which is something we do not do here. We do not do that here, not even remotely, which is so incredibly sad.

I have talked about that in the chamber before and hope to continue talking about that, because we will only do our best as a Parliament if we work together, because there is no font of all wisdom. No executive is perfect. Every community has an insight into this state that is valuable, and the only way that any government can truly represent all Victorians is if that government works with all members of this place, and I hope to see one day a government and a Premier that is willing to do that. I do not say that as a way to slight the Premier. I do offer those words in the hope that he hears them and that we in this Parliament can do better at working together collaboratively.

Can I make a number of comments in relation to the community and give thanks to my community – and not only the members of my community who elected me. You have my assurance that I will continue to work on your behalf every day of the week. In fact one of the things that I committed to when I was first elected was doing every constituent-related matter myself. It does mean that I work seven days a week and my wife very rarely sees me and neither do my kids, but I think I owe that to the community. I do not let my staff deal with constituent matters, which sends them absolutely wild, but I owe it to every person in my community who contacts me to know that they are contacting me and that the response is from me. So I thank them with my whole heart, and they have my commitment to seven days a week from me for my entire term.

But we are not elected to this place on our own. We are elected following the incredible work of parts of our community, including our parties, in my case the Liberal Party, and I would like to place on record my overwhelming thanks to my local electorate conference in the Liberal Party for their support and to the hundreds – literally hundreds – of people in the Liberal Party who supported me through the campaign and the hundreds of members of the community that are now part of our local movement. We ran a local campaign, a very strong local campaign – one where, frankly speaking, after going through the federal election and watching the way that the teals campaigned, we learned, and I think anyone who is not willing to admit that is frankly a fool. You need to look at the campaigns around you. You need to look at the way people engage with the community and learn from that, so I made sure that my community was at the core of everything that I did in asking for their re-election, in the way that I spoke to them through advertising and materials sent out, but also as part of the on-the-ground campaign. So thank you to the hundreds of people that were involved in the party and in the community in helping with that. But a special thanks to Jean Hawkins, who my little kids call ‘spare Nanna’. So she is the spare nanna, and she is one of my dearest and closest friends. Also Phil Brown, who I met 25 years ago as a young teenager walking into my first branch meeting, has stayed with me for the full 25 years, which is extraordinary.

Also and obviously the most important is your family. Your family suffer greatly, incredibly greatly, when you choose this job. They do not ask for this job, and my kids were almost born into me being deeply involved in politics. My kids are the most important thing in my life bar nothing – bar nothing. I heard one of the new members speak earlier about love and the importance of love and the endlessness of love, and I think those words were profound words. We should all remember them in everything we do, everything we do in this place. So to my wife Suzanne and my children, Sofia and Eva, you are my world, and you suffer for this job. One of the candidates unfortunately during my election campaign harassed quite badly my family, including my little children. They suffer in a way that they should not, and my love goes to them incredibly.

There are a number of things that I do want to let my community know that I will be fighting for over the term, and that is continuing to advocate for our schools. One of the members earlier spoke about the fact that their electorate had changed hands and therefore the government would consider funding

in that electorate. Well, unfortunately that is actually the case. There are electorates held by non-Labor members that are not receiving the funding they deserve. School funding is directed five-sixths of the time into government-held seats in Melbourne. Schools deserve equal funding. Children deserve funding no matter what school they are from, and Brighton Primary is an example of a historic school that is in desperate need of funding. Elwood College and Elwood Primary are in desperate need. I do acknowledge the government, through years of advocacy, has committed funding now to Hampton Primary and Gardenvale, and I appreciate that funding. It was timely.

But we also need to consider the lack of funding when it comes to protecting our community, and we have seen incredible crimes in my community. We have seen a rapid growth of home invasions. Only this week the police confirmed that in areas like Bayside and Port Phillip, 324 vehicles had been stolen over a four-month period. When these issues were first raised, the Premier said it was not happening and attacked a woman, a resident of my community, for raising it. He blamed her for raising it and said it was not happening. It has now been confirmed to be true. The coalition committed to a police station in our community, and I implore the government to consider the genuine crimes.

I will end where I started and say I have heard the community again, and I will continue to reflect modern Victoria in everything that I do and everything that I fight for in this chamber.

Members applauded.

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (18:09): I begin by of course acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, and I pay my respects to the elders past and present. It is a privilege to stand on the land of the oldest living culture, whose care for the land and the sea sustained their community for more than 60,000 years. I acknowledge the Boon Wurrung people, the traditional owners of the Point Cook electorate.

I join many others in congratulating you, Speaker, on your re-election. I hope you remember well my well wishes when you make rulings against me in this place.

I join a government of which I could not be prouder. To the people of Point Cook, I start by thanking you for the trust that you have given me. The best way that I can honour this trust is by working hard every day for you. I ran for Parliament because it is the single best way to better our community. There are many reasons and experiences that drove me to politics. I will reflect on just three here. Firstly, as a teenage volunteer in disability organisations, well before the NDIS, people with disability relied on volunteers to share the same life experiences as their peers. As a volunteer I could support one person. Governments can change the lives of millions.

Secondly, I grew up in the Kennett era, when both my parents' jobs were at risk from another Liberal government. As a child it kept me up at night. My parents did not know at the time, but I feared for our future. Recently my dad said to me, in a moment of clarity, 'When you were very young you would spend every single dollar you had.' I was surprised I had so many dollars. But this changed overnight. Governments influence actions and how people feel much more than we can know.

Thirdly, in my first job as a cleaner at the MCG I cleaned the soggy pies and the cold chips, and I watched the power of employers over employees – casual workers who, if they did not get the work that night, they and their families would suffer in the week ahead. So of course these experiences led me to Labor, to want to be part of solutions to improve people's lives.

I enter this Parliament with the hope that I can make a small contribution to the betterment of our state and the community that I represent. Victorians will be affected by the decisions that we make here and that we decide not to take, and that weighs heavily upon me, as I know it does on everybody else. But I have hope and optimism and confidence. I have these because I have watched the reforms of this government that have been waiting for generations to be taken up be taken up: truth telling and treaty, family violence reform, mental health reform, three-year-old kinder, rebuilding our public utilities like

the SEC. These are making and will make the lives of Victorians better; however, the work of government is never complete.

I am confident that this Parliament, the 60th Parliament, can take on more of these reforms, especially with the leadership of Premier Daniel Andrews and our extraordinary ministerial and parliamentary colleagues, to decide the actions and to take the actions for those who need government most – people in prison who with a bit of support can turn their lives around and those who should have never been there in the first place, people who need a roof over their head, people who miss out on so much of life because they never got the health and dental care that they needed. A lot of these things come down to luck – who your parents are and where you were born. This government can and is putting the odds back in favour of those people who need us most, and I commit to doing that every day.

I am the first member for Point Cook but not the first member to represent the suburbs of Altona Meadows, Point Cook and Seabrook, represented by Jill Hennessy previously, and Werribee South, represented by the Treasurer Tim Pallas previously. In Jill's first speech she said:

I do not believe governments should always hold our hands, but they should not sit on their hands either.

Jill did not sit on her hands and has marked her place in the history of this state through her efforts on voluntary assisted dying through safe access zones, nurse-to-patient ratios, banning LGBTIQ+ conversion therapy and criminalising wage theft. We did this together, but it was she who led the fight.

The Treasurer's fingerprints are all over every major decision of this government – and you give more than you get. You are following the advice of your father, who you mentioned in your first speech. The Treasurer also said in his first speech:

The most valuable things that we can build are the bridges between each other.

You will be happy to know that I have already begun advocating for more bridges in Point Cook. Point Cook was named for John M. Cooke, spelt with an E, who was the mate on His Majesty's vessel, the *Rattlesnake*. The published narrative of the voyage of HMS *Rattlesnake* describes Melbourne in 1848 as follows:

The town (or city as it may, I believe, be termed) appeared to have wonderfully increased of late, and a quiet business-like air prevailed ... there were few loungers ... in the streets, nearly everyone seeming to have his time fully occupied.

It appeared to be the general and loudly expressed opinion, so far as we could judge, that the separation of the Port Phillip district from New South Wales, and its formation into an independent colony, would materially advance the interests and conduce to the prosperity of the former; and that the large surplus revenue which is annually transmitted to Sydney ought to be spent among the people who ... raised it.

How true, how true. Point Cook is the birthplace of the Royal Australian Air Force and is Australia's oldest RAAF base. It held the 13th Australian Grand Prix. It was held in Point Cook and 26 started the race. It was a stinking hot day and only 10 finished. A first-time competitor won, not dissimilar to the recent election in Point Cook. We have many natural and man-made wonders in the electorate. The saltworks on the site of the Ramsar-protected wetlands were productive for seven decades. They are productive again now as a place for migratory birds – 25 kilometres from Melbourne with the Point Cook Coastal Park and marine sanctuary alongside. These are of international significance. They are fed by the creeks Laverton and Skeleton. The colourful beach boxes of Campbells Cove may well be as good as Brighton. There is the safety of Wyndham Harbour, the heavily underrated Werribee South beach alongside the well-used boat ramps and jetties, the red cliffs of the Werribee River, the Werribee mansion, the Victoria State Rose Garden, the National Equestrian Centre and the expanding Werribee Open Range Zoo.

The Werribee South farmlands were shaped by Italian migrants from the 1920s onwards who turned the dairy farms into market gardens that still thrive today. On just 0.02 per cent of the land, they produce 10 per cent of Victoria's vegetables – the broccoli, the cauliflower and the lettuces on your

plate. It is a real asset to have productive farmland so close to our main population centres. The preservation of the green wedges is vitally important.

Point Cook the suburb has grown from 580 people in 1996 – 552 of whom lived on the RAAF base – to more than 66,000 in the last census. The growing pains of this community are real and affect the suburbs of Seabrook and Altona Meadows. The challenge must be met and can only be met by Labor. Point Cook the suburb is proudly the most multiculturally diverse in the country, and that means really, in reality, the world – a real point of pride, a real community strength. We might have different pasts, but we have a shared and common future together. All the communities across the electorate are welcoming, and I am thankful for the contributions that they make to the state every single day.

My family history will sound familiar to many from the community that I live in and the community here. My father and mother, Lauri and Jenny, were born in Finland and England respectively. Their parents came to Australia seeking better lives for themselves and their children. I am thankful for my late grandparents' courage and their sacrifice, leaving their homes, their families and everything that was familiar. It is a story repeated across the electorate of Point Cook. It was an act of courage. Without that courage their children, their grandchildren and now their great-grandchildren would not have known the lives we would have missed here in Australia.

My parents instilled in me many things, the most important of which was a loving home. I was always loved, and sacrifices were always made for me and my brother, and they still are. Thank you, Mum and Dad. My most serious critique of our home life was the phenomenal amounts of sugar we ate. For years school lunches included sandwiches with hundreds and thousands on them – at my request, not theirs. This is not the only reason that I care passionately about dental care. Luke, you are the best brother for me. Where I have followed in your footsteps it is because you have made good choices. I would not be here without you. I thank Hayley, Aubrey and Rory for being there for Cassie and me in the hard times. To the extended Hilakari and Bullock families, I have not always made every single event; that is not going to change. I wish I could be there more, and I thank you for your love and support always. I want to acknowledge Uncle Michael, who would have loved to have been here so much today. To the Farley family – Shannon, Nicola, Niamh, Jemima, Jonah, Justin, Kate, Scarlett, Tom, Ethan – thank you for your support, but especially to Cathy, who went above and beyond and has so much love for her grandchildren. Like you, I miss Kevin, and I think about what he would have thought on this day – hopefully proud, but with an expectation that so much more must be done.

In Jill's valedictory speech she said that working in Alan Griffin's office had changed the trajectory of her life. Working for Alan has changed the trajectory of many lives. So, thank you, Alan. I am always grateful for your advice, no matter how robustly it may from time to time be delivered. But it was not Alan who gave me my first job in politics; for that I thank now member for South Eastern Metropolitan Region Lee Tarlamis from the other place. I got a call from him, and I gave notice to my boss that day. I worked for and with a multitude of MPs, and I thank them all for their generosity in employing me in a job that I loved and would have done for free. I thank the many who got me to do jobs for free. Your passion of course to serve your communities is what kept me coming back. I want to especially call out Julian Hill; Peta Murphy; Linda White; Jess Walsh; the Minister for Treaty and First Peoples, Gab Williams; the Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep from the other place, Ingrid Stitt; the MPs for Cranbourne and Frankston; and the Minister for Planning, Sonya Kilkenny.

To the many staffers who I have worked with over time, you are often the first point of call when things get really bad for people. You drive the policy, the change and the outcomes that truly make a difference in people's lives. Thank you for your friendship, especially the new member for Pakenham – Emma Vulin, Alfonso, Barb, Daniel, Declan, Helen, Kara, Matt, Milissa, Pat, Ray, Sheridan and Stefan, to name a few.

To my most recent boss Tim O'Hallaron – progressive change is not only done in political offices, and you are a clear demonstration of that.

To my union, the ASU private sector branch, thank you. Secretary Imogen Sturni is a friend and a powerful leader. To Dave, Kristy, and all the team, my thanks. I want to thank my first union, the now United Workers Union, Jo Briskey and all the team, as well as the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, Lisa Fitzpatrick and the ASU authorities and services branch, Lisa Darmanin, Leon Wiegard and Luke. I thank all the trade unions and a reinvigorated Trades Hall for working towards the betterment of our lives and the lives of their members.

Thank you to the office team, our dedicated Labor members, the Point Cook branch, ALP and SL members who supported the campaign. Connor, Alison and Abi, your efforts in the campaign went above and beyond, and I will be forever in your debt.

Abselom, Minister Andrew Giles, Binari, Casey, Catherine, Christine, Chris, Clancy, Dave, Ekta, Erik, Eve, Gaye, Hamish, Harry, Jason, Jas, Jay, Japinder, Jenna, Jess – halfway there – Joel, JB, Julian, Kapil, Kos, Lauren, Libby, Minister for Climate Action – Lily D’Ambrosio, Lori, Luke, Mark, Mita, Paul, Paddy, Dr Rattan, Sam, Sandy, Sheldon, Solly, Sudhir, Tony, Vidhi, Yassar, and especially my friend Kat Hardy. Thank you, while I name you here, you mean so much more to me than this. Without a strong Labor team in and supporting Point Cook, we just could not have done it.

Finally, to Cassie – we have always worked out, but not everything has worked out for us. I wanted to propose to you at a beach picnic in Italy. Between the swims it never quite happened. Instead, we got engaged watching the *Godfather* – you might say I am the original romantic. We waited too long to get married and then COVID happened, so we are happily still engaged. We want another child, and I carry three in my heart. It will work out. We are the luckiest parents in the world, with a perfect stomping, laughing, singing, talkative little man. It is impossible to express how much I love you both. You are the twin centres of my world.

I finish this speech where I started: thank you to the people of Point Cook. I will not waste a day.

Members applauded.

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit) (18:33): Thank you for the opportunity to deliver my first speech as the member for Kororoit. It is a great honour that our community has given to me, and I am here because of you. I am here for you, and I promise that you can count on me to be your voice in Parliament House. Having a voice is powerful; it is a privilege. So many people do not have a voice when they should. Some communities have been fighting for too long to have a voice, none more so than our First Nations people.

I honour and I recognise the people of the Kulin nation as the traditional owners of Victoria. I pay my respects to elders past, present and future who have continuous connection to the land and the waterways of our community. I am proud of the steps that both the Andrews and Albanese governments are making to create a Voice to Parliament for Indigenous people, to heal with truth-telling and with justice, and I look forward to making my own contributions to these incredible milestones.

The west is full of significant places for its people. As one of the most culturally diverse electorates in the state, Kororoit is often the first place that people born overseas call home. Our community is richly populated with new migrants from Asia, the subcontinent, Africa and Eastern Europe. During my months on the campaign trail I loved getting to know the cultural, faith and community groups in our region. These groups provided everything, from food to sport to advocacy, helping transition families into Australian life. They are essential to social cohesion and peaceful communities. Diversity is Kororoit’s and the west’s greatest strength. But at times it has also meant that it has been overlooked and under-resourced, especially when Labor is not in government. The Andrews government is changing that. Amongst the billions of dollars that have been invested in the west it has invested \$14.8 million in multicultural communities. I plan to continue that trend in Kororoit, because I understand what it is like to have a name that no-one else can pronounce, to have a parent whose first language is not English and to feel ‘othered’ by cultural heritage, although I must say I am a deeply

Aussie girl, I love my party pies and Vegemite and I am addicted to sport. Basketball is actually my sport of choice, and I was the captain of the senior Victorian Basketball League women's team, the Altona Gators.

The truth is, though, my name has not always made things easy for me. However, I do think that it assisted with the development of my thick skin. Casual racism, monocultural leadership, subtle judging by name, colour and language – these are things that no Victorian should ever have to put up with, not on public transport, not on the sports field, not in our schools and not here in Parliament. Diversity matters here too, and it is incredibly important that our Parliament reflects the communities which we represent. I applaud the work that so many multicultural organisations do supporting our diverse peoples and communities. I want them to know that they have a friend here. The west of Melbourne has a friend here.

I am a lifelong westie. I was born and raised in Altona. I attended schools in the western suburbs and studied a double degree – a bachelor of arts and business – at Victoria University. My first jobs as a teenager were in small businesses in the west – family-run restaurants, retail and delivering local newspapers – and my first job in politics was working for the late Lynne Kosky in her Altona electorate office. I ran successfully for Hobsons Bay City Council, serving as the deputy mayor in the region, and I want to make mention of my many Hobsons Bay council colleagues who are here tonight and who have supported me along the journey. The west has been my life and is in my soul. Being able to represent the west is a lifelong dream.

My mum Robyn was very dedicated to charity work and was recognised for it with a Victorian of the Year nomination and an international peace award. But while she was working for peace and security in the community, at home things were far from safe. I am in awe of the strength that it took my mother to flee from a violent relationship with two kids in tow and to re-establish herself independently. Because of Mum's bravery I did not have to live with family violence for long, but I know that this is not the case for so many women and children, and that is why the Andrews government's full implementation of the 227 royal commission recommendations and the record \$3 billion investment in family violence means so much to me. Thank you.

Mum raised me and my big brother Robbie in a small intergenerational home, including my Grandpa Beepa, who sadly is not with us today, and my gorgeous Uncle Ken. Mum poured everything into us. Robbie and I never wanted for anything. Mum was always a doer, volunteering at schools, at our basketball clubs and more. She did all of this whilst being the sole breadwinner for our family. It is my mum you can blame for introducing me to the Labor Party. She took me out on the campaign trail when I was only tiny. We were letterboxing, we were handing out on election day – you name it. One of my earliest memories as a child, however, was skipping home from Seaholme Primary School one day after Joan Kirner visited our school. I was only 12 years old at the time, but I was beyond impressed. With Joan I could see that she made a difference, and I wanted to make a difference in our community as well. I have got to say, I skipped home from school, I told my mum and she was thrilled.

I became very active as a young Labor member of the Altona branch. The branch president at the time, and still to this day in fact, was the mighty John Ballestrino – as I know him, JB. JB became a very close friend and someone who I unconditionally trust. He is one of those incredible male leaders in our party who enjoys seeing Labor women succeed – and working for them too. Through the Altona ALP branch I got the sense of that enormous family which I had been missing. JB, my mum and other volunteers would organise the big fundraiser that was the main event of the year, the Melbourne Cup Day ALP fundraiser. It would bring the entire Labor tribe together, and we loved it.

I dearly loved giving back to the community, whether it was reading books to the elderly at St George's nursing home, building facilities for Rotary's disability-accessible Camp Getaway or cooking up a sausage storm at the local Bunnings. Community volunteering became a big part of my life when I was younger, so when I was preselected for Kororoit I hoped to bring that same community ethos and sense of family, which had been so welcoming to me as a young person, into the campaign. I have

been blessed with the love and the support of the many Kororoit branch members, who really got behind the campaign. And they are here tonight – thank you. It makes me excited that our branch meetings are thriving. We had 72 at the last branch meeting – that does not happen normally. The Labor Party is not just about people who get elected to Parliament House; it is about our members and their love for our community. They keep members of Parliament honest and they remind us who we are working for, and I thank all of the branchies who are here tonight. I know you will keep me grounded and down-to-earth.

I know that I can also rely on this from my comrades in the trade union movement. Thriving branches and a strong, outspoken industrial wing make Labor strong. They ensure that we govern with honesty for working people. I am and I always will be a committed unionist. I was first employed by the Rail, Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) in 2010 as the industrial and women's officer. Secretary Trevor Dobbyn gave me my first gig in the union movement, and I will forever be grateful for Trev's early support. Working for the union, though, is not for the faint-hearted. I was a young female organiser in a very male-dominated industry. One of my earliest memories was when I rolled up to E-gate, which is just off Dynon Road under the overpass. It was the middle of winter, it was freezing cold, it was 10 pm at night and it was very, very dark. The boys were about to start night shift, and they were gearing up to have their meeting outside. It started raining, so one of the guys suggested, 'Hey, let's meet in the men's dunnies.' I looked at my delegate and I said, 'Rightio, into the men's change rooms we go.' So that is how I conducted my first meeting for the infrastructure division: in the men's change rooms in front of 150 blue-collar blokey blokes, some of whom are here tonight.

When I was asked to nominate as the Rail, Tram and Bus Union state secretary, Darren Galea and Grant Wainwright, both of whom are here tonight, championed me. Thank you, guys, for your support, your encouragement and your ongoing solidarity. It will never be forgotten. I became the youngest state secretary of a trade union in Victorian history and the first woman secretary of the Rail, Tram and Bus Union. The support of my colleagues, delegates and members meant the world to me. My years at the Rail, Tram and Bus Union were transformative not only for me but also for the union. As some of you know, we did not hesitate to stop trains and trams to ensure that hardworking members got the recognition that they deserved, to secure improved amenities for staff or to support fairer working hours in infrastructure and maintenance. During this time I was proud to be recognised for my work alongside my team by winning the ACTU Jennie George Award and the Trades Hall Zelda D'Aprano Award. But always it was the recognition from the job – not the stuff that came with the shiny medal or the title – that meant the absolute most to me.

At times my pursuit of members' best interests brought me into conflict with people in this house, but being a good union official is not always about making the government of the day feel comfortable, even when it is your party in office. I always knew that the decisions that I was making were in pursuit of the best outcome for our members and they were made with the backing of the collective. We won some and we lost some. We secured better pay and conditions for members, but the trains and the trams still remain in private hands. The privatisation of our rail networks, like the privatisation of our energy supply, has not been in the best interests of rail workers, the commuters or the state. Whether it is hospitals, whether it is schools, whether it is electricity or transport, I believe that when it comes to essentials the state really is the best and the most responsible service provider.

I have got plenty of scar tissue from my time in the union – it was tough – but it was also the making of me as an advocate and a leader. The RTBU is my extended family – thank you especially to Darren, Grant, Amedeo D'Aprano, Bryan Evans, Victor Moore, Caitlin Brown, Joe Dennis, Phil Altieri and Darren Lamont for always having my back then and now. To Vik Sharma, congratulations on your election. I am so thrilled and I cannot wait to see where you take the union next. Thank you to my national RTBU comrades, who got behind my leadership as the first female national president of the RTBU as well. Our national secretary, who has flown here from Sydney, Mark Diamond, is here tonight – thank you for all of your support as well, brother.

Working for the Rail, Tram and Bus Union also brought me into a cabal of fierce advocates from other unions. I would not be here without their support, friendship and loyalty. As anyone close to me knows, these things matter greatly to me. I am as solid and as good as my word, because at the end of the day that is all you have got. I am grateful to have found fellow travellers, so thank you to Johnny Setka – I think it is your first time in the gallery, is it not? – Christy Cain, the Myles brothers, Decca, Robbie, Elias, Elizabeth Doidge and all of the CFMEU delegates and young activists who got behind me in the Kororoit campaign. To Lloyd Williams, Paul Healey, Kate Marshall, James McWhinney and the entire Health and Community Services Union team; to Steve Howland and Nicole McPherson at the Finance Sector Union; to former secretary John Berger, Mike McNess and Mem Suleyman at the Transport Workers Union; and of course to Shane Stevens and the mighty Maritime Union of Australia, who literally worked tirelessly to see me elected. To all of the members of the Victorian Trades Hall Council in which I served as a former vice president as well as other unions that I have not mentioned tonight – I see Earl Setches and Michael Donovan – thank you for your support along the journey. To every trade union, please know that my door is always open to any union colleagues.

I also would not be here without the sisterhood. I have been lucky to have been supported by some incredible women: Joan Kirner of course went from being my hero to a friend and a champion and the late Lynne Kosky – two great Labor women, sadly both of them lost to cancer. There have been too many women in our ranks who have fallen victim to this disease, including my late, great friend Jane Garrett, and still more who have bravely battled it whilst holding office. While I am in this place I intend to dedicate time to supporting women's health and the prevention of women's cancers. Of course Labor's sisterhood is more than the women who become members of Parliament. A huge shout-out to the EMILY's angels, the incredible network of women dedicated to lifting women in politics up, and to my own Labor sisterhood, who gave me both time and money generously and helped out on the campaign: Lisa Zanetta, Trish and Amanda Crossin, Leonie Morgan, Maree Overall, Zeynep Yilhurst, Pamela Anderson, Kim Travers, and my local women from Kororoit, Jen, Jess, Cass and the Marlenes – the list does go on. Extra big kisses to Tanja Kovac, a true Labor feminist legend and gender equality warrior – thank you for reminding me of the power of women's friendship in politics.

To the entire Kororoit campaign team and the campaign committee, thank you. You were all so welcoming, and there was no end to the hours that you put in. It literally took a village, and there are far too many of you to name. It was an organic campaign, a campaign team that came directly from the heart of Kororoit, and I know that you are all here tonight out in the hall. Thank you for all that you did. Our Kororoit volunteers spent hours putting up corflutes and signs around the area, doorknocking, street-stalling and pre-polling, and then of course there was election day.

To current and former members of Parliament who helped me on the campaign trail with fundraisers and office openings, thank you for your wisdom, your encouragement and your support.

My name, Luba, means love. I believe in the power of love in politics. Love and understanding move so much more in this world than hate and resentment. So to the big loves of my life: to my mother, thank you for your belief in me and your constant love. You made me the woman that I am today. To my big brother Robbie, it will always be you and me against the world. Your shoulders are so broad; so many rely on you. You are a rock to so many in tough times as you have been to me – you truly are a great man. To my sister-in-law Natalie, who has a heart of gold and love to give; to Uncle Ken the gentlest of all souls – after Nanna died Mum took over as your carer and champion, but the truth is while we gave you a home it was you who has always been healing us; and to my gorgeous girl gang outside of politics Becky, Jess and Tarryn, thank you for keeping me grounded, making me laugh and not letting me take myself too seriously.

Finally, to my husband Ben: I will forever be grateful for the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced us both to slow down in our busy lives – you running BGH and me a trade union. We were friends for a long time before becoming husband and wife, and I believe that this is the secret ingredient to our partnership. Thank you for literally making me packed lunches every day during pre-poll, for learning the words to *Solidarity Forever*, for making me a stepmum to your three beautiful children, who are

here tonight, Audrey, Max and Chloe, and for always believing in me. You made me the happiest woman in the world a couple of weeks ago, marrying me before our family and friends.

People may be surprised about a leftie trade union official marrying the son of a former Liberal Tasmanian Premier, but we both believe deeply in public service. Like Ben's dad Robin, I want to devote my life to making the lives of Victorians – in his case Tasmanians – better. I respect everyone in this Parliament as I know that you all want to make Victoria the best place to live. We all have common ground. We need to work together to make lasting changes. That is what matters to the people of Victoria and especially Kororoit, to whom I give my biggest love. Thank you for the privilege and the honour that you have afforded me by electing me as the local member. Thank you for believing in our shared vision of a fairer, welcoming and thriving state. Let us work together to make this place a loving place to live, to work and to play.

Members applauded.

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (18:55): I am delighted to rise and make a contribution on the address-in-reply to the Governor and begin by thanking the people of the Ovens Valley, who put their faith in me for a fourth time to be their voice in Spring Street. From Cobram to Katamatite, from Yarrowonga to Yarroweyah, from Bundalong to Bright, from Myrtleford to Mount Beauty, from Dederang to Greta and from Glenrowan to Peechelba, the Ovens Valley is truly an electorate for all seasons and has something for everyone. We have the dairy industry, stone fruit orchards, broadacre cereal cropping, market gardens in Burramine and olives in Yarrowonga. From the snow-capped mountains of Mount Hotham and Dinner Plain to the peaks of Falls Creek and from the mighty Murray River to the tributaries of the Buffalo River, we have so much to be proud of and so many natural beautiful wonderlands – yet sadly the government for Melbourne cannot see much beyond Kalkallo. We get a few crumbs off the table while we see billions and billions being poured into holes in Melbourne.

While a health crisis exists in every country town, the government for Melbourne throws good money to win inner-city fights without a care in the world for our regions. Health care has been abandoned in regional Victoria. The health service is falling apart, and our hardworking staff have been neglected by this government. We heard today a story from our own member for Euroa, who told her story and her encounter with regional health. Health care in Cobram has been seriously overlooked. We do not have an ultrasound facility, and we have been denied a dialysis unit as well. If you look at the Bright health precinct, I have been fighting hard with other local MPs to get the government to provide the \$40 million to perform a major overhaul and upgrade to provide the residents of Bright with the health care that they deserve. Bright is a major tourist destination, yet the hospital and aged care facilities are years past their upgrade dates – decades.

To further show how out of touch this government is, the Treasurer responded to one of my letters asking for this funding by talking about aged care in Cohuna and Camperdown, which are 300 kilometres and 500 kilometres away from Bright respectively. We want to keep residents who need aged care local, not ship them hundreds of kilometres away. Alpine Health, which is located in Bright, also lacks decent emergency room facilities, which means many urgent cases have to be sent to Wangaratta, Mansfield or Albury-Wodonga, yet this government still have the audacity to say that they care about the health of all Victorians. Bright is growing at an unprecedented rate. Tree changers, baby boomers and everyone in between are calling Bright home. Tourism is booming, especially cycling. Road cyclists, mountain bikers and family cyclists fill the streets, trails and tracks. But I urge: do not fall off and need medical attention, because the wait could be too long and too much to bear.

Wangaratta hospital is at breaking point, with staff members doing double shifts and nursing staff needing more assistance. Yarrowonga and Cobram need serious investment to keep pace with the population's growth. Our country health facilities have held together, and their staff do an absolutely outstanding job, yet we still cannot see a light at the end of the tunnel to see how that will all pan out. I say again: the staff do an absolutely sensational job. I do not know where we would be without the brilliant and capable staff that we have, but this cannot continue. Ambulance wait times have

ballooned, and again no end is in sight in the short term. Every week I am told more stories of residents within the Ovens Valley with tales of woe of ambulances that did not arrive or ambulances that were so late that people had to take their loved one to hospital in the family car.

This government has called Victoria the Education State. Well, it is fine to put a label on it and call it the Education State, but if you ask the people in Yarrowonga – the fastest growing township in regional Victoria; it is absolutely booming – after eight years of being the Education State Yarrowonga has not seen a single cent of capital works for the final stage of Yarrowonga P–12. The previous Baillieu–Naphthine government funded the second stage, and we continue to hear crickets as we wait for the government to be fair. I will not give up on Yarrowonga, even if this government seems to have already done that. As Victoria’s education standards drop, Yarrowonga P–12 waits patiently. Our pristine environment, our wildlife –

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Mary-Anne THOMAS: I move:

That the sitting be continued.

Motion agreed to.

Tim McCURDY: I was pleased to see a motion passed in the other place forcing the government to stop the shooting of brumbies and wild horses in our national parks. The stories I have been told about the treatment of brumbies are disgraceful. At the same time we have seen serial pest animal populations spiralling out of control – sambar deer, wild dogs, pigs, cats. They certainly need management.

Firewood collection is another major concern of mine. With the cost of living going through the roof, Victorians will continue to turn towards wood heating in the home; gas and electricity are simply too expensive for many. But firewood collection coupes must be accessible and must have available wood. Often we find we need to drive 150 kilometres or more to find the coupe and then find that coupe has been exhausted of decent wood. Opening up firewood collection coupes can genuinely offset cost-of-living increases.

Road maintenance budgets have been slashed under this government. They stopped the country roads and bridges program, and we are all feeling the pain. I see and hear every day from constituents in my electorate about another road, another pothole, another hard shoulder that is causing issues. Councils in regional Victoria have thousands of kilometres of roads to maintain, yet they have smaller budgets than their metropolitan counterparts. It is time for the government to do their job and fund our road maintenance, and not just slap a bandaid solution on it.

We released data from the Victoria’s worst roads campaign, and two of the top 10 roads are in my electorate – notably, number one, the Great Alpine Road, and number eight, the Murray Valley Highway, which are both state government responsibilities. But Singapore Road in Yarrawong is a classic example. It is falling apart at the seams. It is a Moira shire responsibility, but again Moira shire simply do not have the funds – the cash – for the massive road network they have to maintain. They rely on support from the state government, and sadly, that has dried up. These are roads that I travel on every day, and I can say to those opposite that unlike the delusional members on the government benches – or some – the conditions of our roads are not imagined fantasies. They genuinely are very, very poor.

Agriculture remains the backbone for the local economy of the Ovens Valley, and the government for Melbourne again took the chainsaw to the agriculture budget in the last budget. We saw \$87 million cut from the regional development budget and \$47.8 million cut from the agriculture budget. Fruit fly funding was cut by \$2.5 million, and I can tell you from firsthand experience that the orchardists up around Cobram could lose everything if one piece of fruit gets to the wrong export market. Local landcare groups have also contacted me about this to help facilitate backyard fruit fly traps.

I want to turn to ambulance response times, although I mentioned them earlier. In this state, particularly regional Victoria, the Ovens Valley electorate has surprisingly good code 1 response times compared to shires in my colleagues' electorates, such as the members for Benambra, Murray Plains, Ripon and Polwarth. 'Good' is of course a subjective term, because when I look at the data and see Alpine shire, 42.3 per cent; Moira shire, 47.6 per cent; and Wangaratta, 68 per cent, it really is not that good. In fact it is quite ordinary. Patients are dying waiting for ambulances, and they are being told by ESTA and the 000 operators to get a cab or get a friend to take them to hospital in the middle of the night. Where is the urgency to solve this crisis? I for one will not just accept substandard ambulance response times but will fight for the resources that we need.

Last year we saw flooding like we have never seen before and for many, many years from Maribyrnong here in Melbourne, Mildura, Shepparton, Rochester, Echuca, Thornton, Mansfield and other places all around the state. I have raised the prospect many times of building Big Buffalo, and I have raised the prospect of looking at the opportunities for hydro-electricity, for water storage for dry years. With the water that flowed through our state last year I cannot understand why the government will not consider looking at the potential and the opportunities that Big Buffalo would provide. Where is their vision?

We have got a vision – and that vision has been alive a long time, since the 1960s – about building Big Buffalo, extending the wall and looking at hydro-electricity. The land is owned by the government, so it is not as though it is a massive issue in trying to secure the land. That vision needs to take form. We have only got to see a year like last year with so much water going out of the state and ending up in the ocean – some of that water could have been captured and saved for a rainy day, or a non-rainy day so to speak. Every time I raise this in Parliament I get the same response from a government that refuses to look at dams for water security and renewable energy generation. If it is not in Melbourne, it does not seem to be important.

The Victorian government needs to work with the federal government and the local community on nation-building infrastructure projects. We own the land. The community is backing it. The money is there. All this government needs to do is refer it for a further study to the National Water Grid Authority to assess its feasibility, and the federal government will actually fund it. They have got the cash, so it is not as though we are looking for dollars to do this. The National Water Grid Authority will do a feasibility study while they are doing them around New South Wales and Queensland. We need to look at these opportunities because we know with energy prices that anything we can do with hydro would certainly make life a lot easier and offset some of those power needs.

We know a regular talking point for the government is how they are all about providing affordable and social housing and all about giving Victorians the chance to get into the housing market, and this is from the same government whose Premier told the *Guardian*:

We're always talking about the great Australian dream, absolutely. But I get a sense ... they're much more focused on ... living where they want to live and ownership is not such a big thing. They are happy to rent with secure terms.

That was a quote from the Premier. This to me shows how out of touch he is, certainly in regional Victoria and I suspect in Melbourne as well. We all still believe in the great Australian dream. People want their own house and not to be at the whim of their landlord, and if the government were serious about housing we could certainly be doing more. This includes a much-needed and long overdue reformation of the planning system in Victoria. I am certainly regularly hearing from mayors within the Ovens Valley about issues caused by the planning system and the red tape of this government, and this means they are unable to get their housing developments turned around in time to meet demand. We have a social and affordable housing development in Wangaratta tied up in red tape in VCAT due to the untenable regulations that the council has to jump through, and this is a 90-house development that Wangaratta needs now, not in two years time. I think all MPs in this place would have similar stories. This red tape has to be removed quicker to try and make sure that we can get this affordable housing in all of our communities. All across my electorate developments are being held up by

bureaucrats in the planning department, and we cannot afford the delays. None of us can, and I think I speak for both sides of the house in saying how difficult it is for all of us. House prices have risen by over 50 per cent in the past year alone. Locals are being priced out of the market by migrants who are fleeing Melbourne, so many locals cannot afford to stay local anymore.

Finally, I just want to take a moment to reflect. As a 17-year-old I was a Rotary exchange student in Canada. I still have close friends over there, and I lived with four magnificent families. One such mentor was Roy ‘Turkey’ Gordon. That was his nickname, ‘Turkey’. He recently passed away, and he was the funniest bloke the world has ever seen. But he was a true leader, and he was a guy that taught me a lot. He always thought globally but acted locally and delivered locally. He was the mayor of a local town, in Bradford, and a bloke who taught me a lot about advocacy, how to support others and how making a team is not about being with people that you like or necessarily having the same skills but forming a team with others that have different skills to you. His family, Ann, Matt, Luke and Lori, will all miss him, and so will his community. Vale, Roy ‘Turkey’ Gordon.

I want to conclude by again thanking the people of the Ovens Valley, who put me in this place. Without their support, clearly I would not be here. To my family and friends who worked tirelessly standing on polling booths, doorknocking and assisting to get the Nationals elected in regional seats I am extremely grateful. Thank you to Jacinta and Noah, who are an amazing team in my office. I am very grateful for their commitment, the work that they do and their work ethic. Thank you very much to those two. The Nationals team is a family, and our family has grown for the 60th Parliament. I am extremely proud of what we will achieve together. Peter Walsh is an exceptional leader, and I am very grateful to him and his leadership. The Nationals are truly the voice for regional Victoria.

Members applauded.

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo – Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Suburban Development) (19:09): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned until later this day.

Business of the house

Postponement

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo – Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Suburban Development) (19:09): I move:

That the consideration of remaining business be postponed.

Motion agreed to.

Adjournment

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

South-West Coast electorate schools

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (19:10): (21) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education, and the action I seek is for the minister to advise what steps she is taking to prevent violence in South-West Coast schools and what support is being provided to teachers to achieve this. I have been contacted by concerned parents of secondary school students enrolled at Victorian government secondary schools in South-West Coast expressing their alarm at the inability of the Victorian education system to protect their children from physical violence from their fellow students. There are children in South-West Coast secondary schools who have personal safety intervention orders, also known as IVOs, due to instances of physical violence perpetrated on them during school hours on school premises by fellow students.

One student was targeted by a group of older students who physically assaulted them by pushing them to the ground and striking them repeatedly. This was captured on CCTV, and the matter is now in the hands of the police. This same student was then actively pursued by the same group of older students during class changeover and repeatedly assaulted. Another student was not only repeatedly physically assaulted at school but also harassed and tormented on social media and out in the community. It is not an option for these children to simply change schools, because in regional Victoria educational opportunities are limited. Some of these children have been forced to enrol in virtual schooling because their schools do not have the resources to ensure their safety. These children have been forced to abandon educational opportunities, the chance for peer relationships and the ability to broaden their horizons due to the under-resourced and overwhelmed school system.

Our teachers are amazing people who do remarkable things to educate, inspire and support our young people, but they need support. Experienced and capable educators have been abandoned by this government and have now been left to their own devices to navigate a world where personal safety intervention orders must be considered in the playground and on sports days. Intervention orders in the playground – you cannot make this stuff up. Parents feel helpless because they are unable to keep their children safe when they are at school, but isn't it the government's job to keep Victorian children safe at Victorian government schools? This government is not doing it. This government is failing Victorian children. Our young people need to be able to learn and thrive in a safe and supportive school environment, not be hospitalised from a brutal assault on the way to the library. Minister, our schools are not safe. Our teachers and principals have been let down by the Andrews Labor government.

Mullauna College

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (19:12): (22) If schools are not safe, one should support Safe Schools, I would have thought.

My adjournment matter is directed to the Minister for Education, and the action I seek is for the minister to please join me on a visit to Mullauna College to inspect current works and celebrate the Andrews Labor government's further commitment of \$17.6 million to the school. Investing in quality education is core business for the Andrews Labor government, and we have not wasted a day in delivering great education projects right across the electorate. Over the last four years we have been delivering multimillion-dollar upgrades at every government high school in the Ringwood electorate, upgrades that are going to fundamentally change the way students learn for the better. From Norwood Secondary to Heathmont College, from Ringwood Secondary to Mullauna College, shovels are in the ground and buildings are rising from their foundations right now as we build the Education State in Ringwood. But we are not resting on our laurels, because there is always more to do, and only the Andrews Labor government will do more for Ringwood – much more.

At Mullauna College in Mitcham \$5.23 million in works to deliver a new F block are already underway, but we are making a new investment to deliver new science rooms, a new outdoor learning space, new technology facilities, fresh new food tech facilities and a new canteen for future generations of Mullauna students, staff and the wider school community. This \$17.6 million investment is a huge win for Mitcham and for the Ringwood electorate, and our local education wins are not contained to the western half of my electorate. Indeed the Andrews Labor government is proud to be backing Heathmont East Primary School. This great local school is set to receive a major \$5.4 million makeover this term, delivering world-class facilities for the next generation of students. HEPS is a terrific school with a long history of service to the tops of the eastern suburbs, and I was delighted to attend their 60th birthday celebrations during last year's campaign. The Andrews Labor government is proud to be backing the school community and equipping them with the new facilities to ensure the school has another brilliant 60 years. Our government is committed to quality public education in Ringwood, and new projects at Heathmont East Primary and Mullauna College are just the beginning.

Sea Lake Mallee Rally

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (19:15): (23) The adjournment I wish to raise is on behalf of the people of Sea Lake to the Minister for Treaty and First Peoples, and the action I seek is the release of the Aboriginal cultural landscape conservation management plan for Lake Tyrrell so a future might be sought for the return of the Sea Lake Mallee Rally.

The Mallee Rally is Australia's oldest known off-road car race. It has been traditionally held over the Queen's Birthday long weekend since its first year in 1974. The event has grown to include about 100 competitors and injects about \$250,000 into the Sea Lake economy. I know that does not sound like much, but for a town like Sea Lake with a population of just over 600 that is enormous.

The issue for the Sea Lake Off Road Club and its supporters of the event is that over four years ago the rally stalled over an Aboriginal heritage ruling. The race's abrupt cancellation came after a state heritage adviser identified traditional Aboriginal artefacts around the lake, which prompted a conservation assessment.

This process, which was paid for by the state government and administered by the shire council, was swift, which was terrific. An interim report immediately determined that the Mallee Rally, however, posed too high a risk for Lake Tyrrell's sensitive cultural heritage, which included proof of 30,000 years of Aboriginal habitation, which I am sure we would all like to be educated on.

Supporters of the race continue to vent their frustrations at the lack of communication and progress. The race had been operating successfully for 47 years. The committee had worked over that time with the traditional owners to protect Lake Tyrrell, its history and its incredible beauty, and it has become an Instagram phenomenon over the last few years. The opportunity is there for traditional inhabitants and owners of Lake Tyrrell to share their stories, to educate us on the culture and the history of the place. People thirst for that knowledge, and I hope a compromise can be reached between the traditional inhabitants and the event organisers so that the Mallee Rally, Australia's longest off-road race, can return to Sea Lake. Minister, the action I seek is for the release of the Aboriginal cultural landscape conservation management plan for Lake Tyrrell.

Sunshine police station

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (19:17): (24) My adjournment is for the Minister for Police and Minister for Crime Prevention, and the action I seek is that the minister join me in visiting Sunshine police station. As the minister well knows, our government has made a really significant investment into supporting our police, with over 3000 new police officers being trained and deployed since we came to government. They do an amazing job in keeping our community safe, whether they are on the beat or in a more specialised capacity, such as our PSOs, and they are delivering fantastic results in reducing the number of criminal incidents in Melbourne's west, including in my electorate of Laverton.

According to recent crime statistics, the City of Brimbank, which includes my communities of Sunshine, Sunshine West, Albion and Ardeer, has seen a drop of 9.1 per cent in the number of criminal incidents in a 12-month period, also bringing them to their lowest number in more than 10 years – in more than 10 years. This is something that we all can celebrate whilst acknowledging that there is still so much more to do to make our community safe and also to ensure that they feel safe. That is why I look forward to accompanying the minister to meet with the police stationed at Sunshine, thank them for their really hard work in delivering these outcomes and also to listen and to discuss what further support they need to do their job and keep Brimbank and Melbourne's west more broadly a safe place to live.

Queens Road, Wandin East

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (19:19): (25) Queens Road, Wandin East, is notoriously a dangerous road – regular severe accidents, fatal accidents. Only a few weeks ago a horror three-car crash left two Victorians dead. What will it take for the government to act? How many more deaths before this government takes seriously the need to upgrade the many known dangerous roads across the Yarra Valley? So today the matter I raise is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety.

On behalf of the residents of Wandin and Seville and the broader Yarra Valley community, the action I seek is for the state government's Department of Transport to take a proactive role in making vital road safety upgrades to the several dangerous intersections along Queens Road in Wandin East, particularly at Beenak Road, Old Baker Road and Wandin East Road.

Please do not just palm this off as a council road. My community is sick of Yarra Ranges council and the Andrews Labor government trying to pass off to each other the road safety matters and the responsibility to upgrade and make roads safe for motorists and pedestrians in our community right across the Yarra Valley. At the end of the day, my community expects all levels of government to work together so that we can avoid road trauma and deaths. I urge the government to investigate and work with the council to fix Queens Road, Wandin East. Council will need VicRoads' engagement in any case, because as locals we know how poorly placed the signage is at these three intersections and that funding will be required.

Emergency services workers from Seville CFA, Wandin CFA and Yarra Ranges police – and we owe a great debt to these people as first responders – are forced to see these horrific accidents all too often and have told me enough is enough, and I agree. Just three weeks ago, in the horrific three-car crash, a 30-year-old woman lost her life instantly. She was a local resident – in fact she lived not far from my house – driving to her workplace, a cherry farm on Queens Road, engaged to be married, a bright future ahead of her. The man involved in the horror crash also died days later from his injuries. Local emergency first responders have told me that of all the accidents they have attended, this was just about one of the worst that they had faced.

There is poor visibility, inadequate warnings and poorly placed signage for these three dangerous intersections on Queens Road. I know – I drive through there regularly. My community is demanding leadership, not ignorance. Please lead and help fix this deadly road.

Boronia train station

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (19:22): (26) Sixty million dollars – that is what we are going to get on and deliver for a major upgrade to Boronia station, and I am so excited that, as promised, we will deliver that \$60 million. Not only will it transform the suburb with a major upgrade of the station, but we will deck over the southern railway trench to create new open space for the community and ensure better integration with the surrounding precincts. Boronia station has not been touched for nearly 25 years so, rightfully, locals – after supporting this proposal – are super keen to know: what next? So I wish to raise a matter for the Minister for Public Transport, and the action that I seek is for the minister to inform my community about the election commitment we made to deliver a \$60 million major upgrade and what the next steps are in delivering this massive project.

This is the biggest investment in a generation in Boronia, and it will deliver the modern station and precinct that Boronia locals need and deserve. Here is a snapshot of some of what we will deliver: a massive overhaul of the station, which will include facade upgrades, platform upgrades, improved lighting, CCTV and furniture. This will activate and create the heart of Boronia by decking over the southern rail trench to create new pedestrian and community spaces that will bring more life to the precinct and create lots of open space. The decking will also create direct pedestrian access from car parking to the Dorset Road shops, making it easier for locals to get around central Boronia. And there will be a major upgrade to the bus interchange, which will also receive new shelters and furniture so passengers can be protected from the elements and can transfer from train to bus services in comfort.

Also, disability access will be improved, with upgraded paths and more handrails and tactile surfaces, and it will create lots of good local jobs too.

Works will commence by 2024 and will be completed in 2026. I am extremely proud to be building, in a very big way, on the work that we are already doing in revitalising Boronia, with around 20 localised projects delivered, underway or soon to start with the investment Boronia has been crying out for in the form of this major investment into the station. I tell you what: I am extremely proud to be part of this government that recognises Knox, that listens and delivers.

Social housing

Sam HIBBINS (Pahran) (19:24): (27) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Housing, and the action I seek is that the minister adopts the recommendations of the Ombudsman's investigation into complaint handling in the Victorian social housing sector, which was released in July last year. Pahran is home to several public housing estates, and I have been privileged to meet many of the residents who call the Pahran electorate home. Over the past few years conditions at our local public housing estates have gone from poor to just woeful. Buildings are run-down and are in constant need of repairs. Many residents are reporting feeling unsafe and routinely report issues including pigeon, rodent and bedbug infestation, filthy communal areas, lack of a security presence and antisocial behaviour. Residents report that these already difficult conditions are made so much worse by the department's apparent inability to adequately manage complaints and requests for assistance.

My office receives requests for help from residents on a daily basis. Some of the stories I have heard and some of the places I have seen are nothing short of disgraceful. Sadly, it is not uncommon for tenants to contact my office in tears or report feelings of hopelessness. Calls to the housing call centre routinely go unanswered and unreturned, and my office has heard from residents who have been waiting over a year for basic maintenance to be carried out. For over two weeks last year the phone line to the security service remained disconnected despite numerous residents reporting it to the housing office. The problem has only been made worse by the fact that housing officers are now seen by appointment only. Residents are reporting that they are feeling like they are a burden or a nuisance.

Many residents are also unaware of and unclear on the process for complaints escalation. My office was advised that residents could escalate requests for maintenance or complaints online or over the phone via the department's feedback service. Residents who attempted to do so, however, reported excessive wait times or that their calls went unanswered and were not followed up. An independent social housing ombudsman and a better implemented complaints handling process would not only assist individual tenants with their requests but also facilitate the gathering of information and quality assurance, which could in turn lead to desperately needed systemic improvements.

Residents are not asking for much, just to live in a safe, secure and adequately maintained home and, perhaps most importantly, to be treated with dignity and respect. Residents are quite rightly fed up. They are tired at being treated like second-class citizens, so on behalf of my constituents and all public housing residents, I strongly urge the government to adopt the Ombudsman's recommendations.

Bacchus Marsh bypass

Michaela SETTLE (Eureka) (19:27): (28) My question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Bacchus Marsh is a growing and vibrant town in my electorate. Many people in Bacchus Marsh have spoken to me about the congestion on Gisborne Road and the real need for a bypass. The Victorian government has invested \$3 million in a planning study for an eastern link road to improve traffic flow and safety in Bacchus Marsh. Regional Roads Victoria has been conducting that planning study for the last year to identify the preferred alignment for a bypass. The action I seek is for the minister to advise when the preferred alignment will be announced.

Jetski regulation

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (19:27): (29) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Outdoor Recreation and pertains to the growing issue of jetskis and their impact on our coastal communities. The action I seek is for further enforcement and regulatory reform on the issue. Jetskis are a popular form of recreation, and there is no suggestion that they should be banned. However, the improper use of these vehicles is having negative consequences on local residents, beachgoers and visitors not just in Nepean but right across Port Phillip.

I am here today to bring to the attention of the minister the fact that the regulations surrounding jetskis are not being properly enforced and in many cases do not go far enough to be effective. Despite the existence of regulations governing the use of jetskis, many operators are disregarding these rules and putting the safety of others at risk. The lack of enforcement is leading to increasing concerns about the impact of jetskis across the peninsula and other hotspots. In spite of the 5-knot rule and other governing regulations, the high speeds and proximity to the beach at which jetskis operate can pose a danger to other watercraft and beachgoers, including swimmers and children. The reckless behaviour of some jetski operators is putting the safety of my constituents at risk, and there is a demonstrated history of serious accidents. This is unacceptable, and it is time for the government to take action to protect the safety of our local residents and visitors.

The solution to these problems lies in the enforcement of existing regulations and ensuring there are sufficient deterrents in place to limit violations. The government needs to better resource the beaches with an increased police presence as, just like on the roads, people are less inclined to break the law when there is a risk of them being caught. The increase in jetskis is putting a huge risk to families and beachgoers using our beaches, and despite years of asking for change, bayside councils are being ignored by the state government. My community of Nepean deserves to feel safe when they go to swim at Port Phillip. Mixing jetskis and families on the beach is a recipe for disaster. Separation of the two activities needs to be addressed and separate PWC access channels implemented. The government must step up and ensure that regulations governing the use of jetskis are properly enforced and appropriately robust. This will require a coordinated effort between the relevant agencies to monitor and enforce the regulations and to take action against those who are disregarding the rules. The proposal to link boat and drivers licences with demerit points for jetski users speeding or ignoring the 5-knot zones must be seriously considered by this government.

In conclusion, I believe it is imperative that we take action to address the improper use of jetskis and engage in a meaningful dialogue around how we can improve the enforcement and regulatory landscape. I therefore call on the government to take swift action to increase enforcement of the current regulations and to begin the process of instigating reforms to ensure stricter rules are applied in the future.

Belgrave train station car parking

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (19:30): (30) I wish to raise a matter with the Minister for Public Transport. The action that I seek is for the minister join me at Belgrave station to view the extraordinary work being carried out under the car parks for commuters program. Belgrave station is a cornerstone of our community's local transport network for both buses and trains. Indeed we have seen increased patronage across Belgrave line as growing numbers of people opt to take the train to their destinations. For those commuting into the city from Belgrave, Monbulk, Emerald and the smaller surrounding towns the stress of finding a car park at Belgrave station in the morning has long been an issue. I am so very proud that the Andrews Labor government has seen this need and addressed it.

We are doing what matters in the Dandenong Ranges by building a multilevel 640-space car park that will include 16 new accessible parking spots, an undercover pick-up drop-off area and a trial of electronic vehicle parking. And in keeping with Belgrave's embracement of the arts, a mural by local primary school children has just been completed at the station. The Andrews Labor government has a strong track record – pardon the pun – on investment in public transport, from the removal of

85 dangerous and congested level crossings by 2025 to the Metro Tunnel and the Suburban Rail Loop. This kind of ongoing investment in public transport is unparalleled.

I welcome these crucial works in our local community to improve public transport usability and accessibility as well as the improvements they will provide to the safety and security of commuters. I would welcome the minister joining me to see firsthand the positive impacts that our government's commitments will make for Dandenong Ranges commuters.

Responses

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo – Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Suburban Development) (19:32): The member for South-West Coast raised a matter for the Minister for Education, and the action being sought was for the minister to provide information in regard to the prevention of violence in schools in South-West Coast. The member for Ringwood also raised a matter for the Minister for Education seeking for the minister to visit Mullauna College in Mitcham. The member for Mildura raised a matter for the Minister for Treaty and First Peoples seeking for the release of the Aboriginal cultural landscape conservation management plan in regard to the Mallee Rally.

The member for Laverton raised a matter for the Minister for Police seeking for the minister to visit Sunshine police station. The member for Evelyn raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety seeking an action for the minister to work with the Department of Transport and Planning and council to investigate safety improvements along Queens Road in Wandin East. The member for Bayswater raised a matter for the Minister for Public Transport seeking for the minister to provide information on the \$60 million election commitment for the Boronia station upgrade. The member for Prahran raised a matter for the Minister for Housing seeking for an action to adopt the recommendations in the Ombudsman's report on the social housing sector, which was released in July last year.

The member for Eureka raised a matter for the minister for roads seeking an action for the minister to advise when the preferred alignment for the Bacchus Marsh–Gisborne bypass would be announced. The member for Nepean raised a matter for the Minister for Outdoor Recreation seeking for further enforcement of the regulations regarding the use of jetskis. The member for Monbulk raised a matter for the Minister for Public Transport seeking an action that the minister join the member at Belgrave station to see the car park works that have been undertaken at that site. I will refer all of those matters to the appropriate ministers for action.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The house now stands adjourned.

House adjourned 7:34 pm.